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# INDIAN SMALL-GAME SHOOTING FOR NOVICES.

BY  
C. A. G. RIVAZ.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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## PREFACE.

THOUGH many books have been written on the subject of big-game shooting in India, few writers have dealt with the less exciting subject of small-game shooting in that country, and none, so far as I know, with the subject from the point of view of the novice.

There is naturally not so much to be said about small as about big game shooting (where every sportsman has fresh tales to tell of his own individual experiences), nor will what is to be said appeal so much to the general reader; but, still, the gun has a far larger practical following than the rifle, and a new-comer in India often feels the need of literature from which he may learn the rudiments of the sport.

It is with the object of supplying this need, however inadequately, that I have written this book. The advice, suggestions, and information which it contains are the result of my own personal experiences in different parts of India, viz., the Punjab, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bengal, and Assam, supplemented by what I have learned from the many experienced sportsmen with whom I have shot.

The book does not profess to be any more than what its title claims for it—namely, a handbook for beginners. With perhaps one exception, the sportsman of experience will find little or nothing in it that he does not know already, and will no doubt find many omissions that wider experience might have supplied. The one exception to which I have referred relates to the use of dogs in the shooting field, for there is no doubt that this fascinating

branch of small game shooting is undeservedly neglected by most sportsmen in India.

I have had occasion to refer to "The Indian Field Shikar Book"—a cyclopædia on Indian sport which every sportsman will find of great practical assistance—but beyond this I have used no outside information in writing this book, except in so far that a great part of what I have written about the training of dogs is derived from Hutchinson's book on dog breaking, the precepts contained in which, though I have not looked at the book for some years, I followed carefully when training my own spaniels. This book is rather antiquated and contains much irrelevant matter—but the practical worth of the author's system is undoubted, and if there is a better book on how to train a gun dog I have not come across it.

C. A. G. RIVAZ.

RICHMOND, SURREY,

*July, 1912.*

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INDIAN HARE (*Lepus ruicaudatus*)

# Indian Small-game Shooting for Novices.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

IT is a matter for surprise, though not altogether for regret, how comparatively few men take advantage of the opportunities ready to hand of indulging in a sport which more than any other serves to ameliorate the conditions of life in the plains of India. The only serious rival to the gun as an instrument of health-giving pleasure to the Anglo-Indian is the horse. But there are many who, from lack of opportunity, inclination, or means, never get upon a horse's back from one year's end to the other, though a great many more find it possible to ride as well as to shoot, and many a day's sport owes part of its enjoyment to the ride to and from the ground.

If the forms of sport pure and simple, as opposed to games or social pursuits, which India offers, are considered, it will be found that they consist of pig-sticking, hunting, big-game shooting, fishing, and small-game shooting. Pig-sticking, as everyone knows, is reckoned by its devotees the finest sport in the world ; but, for obvious reasons, it is a sport which can be practised by only a very small minority, and even if it were one that could number a much larger following, the facts that it is practicable in

comparatively few districts and for a very limited season of the year would debar it from comparison with small-game shooting as a popular sport. The same remarks, to a limited degree, hold good of hunting. Similarly with big-game shooting. There are vast tracts—notably in Northern India—where big game does not exist, and even in those parts where this sport may be enjoyed the difficulties attaching to its successful pursuit are so great that it may be set down as a sport for the favoured few. As for Indian fishing, the localities where really good fishing is obtainable are usually so remote from civilisation and the chances of disappointment so numerous that many an enthusiastic trout and salmon angler has never wetted a line in Indian waters.

But small-game shooting is free from the limitations and disabilities attaching to these sports, and, in addition, possesses advantages and merits to which no other Indian sport can lay claim.

In the first place, it is open to all. Slender, indeed, must be the purse that cannot bear the expense entailed. The heaviest item is ammunition, and if considerations of economy place a check upon the expenditure of cartridges by the avoidance of “just possible” or “trust to luck” shots, the conclusion of the day’s sport will find the shooter a gainer in respect of percentage of kills to cartridges, equanimity of temper, absence of bruised shoulder, and, above all, satisfaction in the knowledge that the dropped leg or unsteady flight which spells the lingering death of some unfortunate bird was not the result of a stray pellet fired at an unpermissible distance.

However, the man who intends to go in seriously for small-game shooting will be well advised to lay in a stock of impedimenta that will come in handy for every sort of shooting that is likely to come his way. The following list includes some articles that many men will manage to dispense with, either from considerations of economy or because they do not feel the want of them.

GUNS AND CARTRIDGES.—I have given hints about them in Chapters VI. and IX.

TENTS.—In many districts where game is obtainable near the station or where dāk or inspection bungalows are situated near the shooting grounds, tents are unnecessary. A dāk bungalow is in charge of a *Khansama*, who supplies meals. In inspection bungalows you must make your own food arrangements, and sometimes take crockery as well as cooking utensils. Even in a dāk bungalow it is often advisable to take your own cook, *deckchies* (cooking pots), and food. You can ascertain whether this is necessary before setting out. The best grounds are, however, often a long way from a bungalow or railway station, and too far off to be shot in a day from your own station. In these cases tents are necessary. An 80lb. tent is the most convenient size for one man and can accommodate two at a pinch. A servants' tent will also be necessary. The cooking is usually done in the open over an extemporaneous mud or brick oven. Second-hand tents can often be picked up cheaply, and a tent in good condition can always be sold when the owner has no further use for it.

CAMP FURNITURE.—This is, of course, only required if you are going to live in tents. A folding

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camp bedstead is, however, always useful. There are often not enough or sufficiently clean beds in bungalows, and sometimes one has to sleep in a railway station waiting-room or on the station platform. As regards other furniture, a chair, table, washing-stand, and bath are sufficient. These should be of a canvas folding pattern.

**COOKING UTENSILS AND CROCKERY.**—Always useful. The cooking pots should be of aluminium and the crockery of thick chinaware and glass. Neither food nor drink taste the same out of enamel. Knives, forks, and spoons of the strongest and plainest. A compact spirit stove and kettle is useful.

**CARTRIDGE MAGAZINES AND BAGS.**—A solid leather or canvas cartridge magazine is very useful, but is a luxury rather than a necessity. A strong wooden box divided into partitions each large enough to take a box of 100 cartridges, and fitted with lock and key, serves the same purpose. Many men merely take out as many plain cardboard cartridge boxes as they think they will want, but this practice is a temptation to pilfering. Stout canvas cartridge bags are good enough, though, of course, leather ones last longer and are impervious to the wet from high, dew-soaked crops, etc. The cartridge bag should be capable of containing not less than 100 cartridges.

**GAME STICK.**—Every shooter should have one. They can be bought at any gunmaker's or sporting shop, or made locally to your directions. There are several recognised patterns. The best is the one with slits for the birds' necks, and a hole with a protecting metal plate, through which their heads are placed before they are slipped down the stick.

See that the *coolie* carrying the game understands that the plate must be sprung back after slipping on a bird, or you may lose some.

**SHOOTING STICK.**—Not essential, but useful, as I have explained in chapters on snipe and duck shooting.

**TIFFIN BASKET.**—Essential. Elaborately fitted baskets of all sizes can be obtained in England, and many shops in India supply excellent baskets fitted with all essentials. An economical arrangement is to get a native-made basket made to your directions and fitted with the required compartments, etc. Some Indian gaols—the Gauhati gaol in Assam among others—turn out good baskets. It is important to get a really strong basket that will stand a lot of knocking about.

**WATER BOTTLES.**—It is a wise precaution to take out a water bottle holding some sort of liquid. Felt-covered aluminium ones are good, as the liquid remains cool if the outer cover is kept wet. But cold tea, which is probably the best drink, should not be put in aluminium. An ordinary whisky bottle, placed in a cloth covering, the upper part of which is detachable, and fitted with a sling for carrying, makes a good water bottle.

**THERMOS FLASKS.**—Useful for hot or cold drinks. Being very brittle, they should be carried in a well-padded stout leather case, and not jarred.

**CLOTHES.**—A loose Norfolk jacket, with big pockets for plenty of cartridges, made of some thin, smooth, *khaki* material is best. In hot weather a spine pad, which can be made detachable, is advisable. The right shoulder can be padded to lessen recoil, but if one suffers from a kicking

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gun a stocking stuck under the coat answers the purpose.

Breeches should be of similar material to the coat, but stouter, so as to withstand thorns, spear grass, cutting reeds, etc. They should be made specially strong inside the knees, as they will probably be used for riding sometimes, and in any case this is where they will fray first if much jungle walking is done. Putties are by far the most comfortable and suitable leg coverings.

Thick woollen socks, soaped if a long day's dry walking is in prospect, should be worn.

The chief point about boots is that they should be comfortable. Heavy boots are a mistake. Sambhur leather boots, with rope soles, are good for dry shooting, but they should not be allowed to get wet.

Light flannel shirts, if one can wear them without discomfort, are the healthiest. Otherwise, thin twill lining shirts, with an undervest of some very light absorbent material, are the best.

*Topees* should be covered with *khaki*, and lined with red inside. They should come right over the back of the neck. The head should never be kept uncovered during the day time, even on a cloudy day or when resting in the shade of a tree. The *topee* known as the "Shikar helmet" is cheap and good.

HOLDALLS.—These useful articles form part of the equipment of every Englishman in India. Unless one is going to make an elaborate toilet, there is really no need to take out anything else for the carriage of one's personal luggage, as a large hold-all will take bedding, rough clothes, toilet necessities,

One would naturally, however, not pack

dress shirts or good clothes in them, and if these rather unnecessary articles for a shooting trip are taken, a dressing-case will be wanted. It is worth while getting a really good, big, strong holdall.

The large majority of articles in the above list will not want renewing for years if they are properly looked after and obtained good in the first instance.

Secondly, there are few, if any, parts of India where small-game shooting of some sort or another is not obtainable. Of course, the paradises where a man may stroll from his tent or bungalow in the morning and return in the evening with a mixed bag of such proportions that his coolies groan and stagger beneath its weight, or sit upon a reed-covered island in *jhil* or *bhil* until his aching shoulder and splitting head revolt from the sight of an overhead duck, do not fall to the lot of many; but the true sportsman will find more pleasure in a season's sport made up of constant excursions in different directions and rewarded by bags of varying proportions and varied nature than in participating in holocausts, which spoil the appetite for more modest days. And what matter if the bags are light or even blank? Disappointment may be keen at the time, but only the veriest pessimist will lose heart and fail to make plans for the next outing. And, after all, the disappointed sportsman can always console himself with the thought that he has had a day's healthy exercise.

Thirdly, it is a sport admirably suited to a busy man. There is usually something to shoot within a fairly short ride or drive of most Indian stations. Even if a journey by rail is entailed, there will



probably be a convenient train in the early morning and one returning in the evening.

Fourthly, the season during which small game can be shot is of very considerable duration. The length of the shooting season varies in different parts of India. It may, however, roughly be said to extend from the beginning of October to the end of March, though these dates are by no means inclusive in the sense that there is nothing to shoot at any other time of the year. September is the best month for quail shooting in the Punjab. April is another good quail month both in the Punjab and United Provinces. In districts where the advent of the monsoon heralds the arrival of the rain, quail excellent sport may be enjoyed at a time of year when most forms of outdoor sport are at a discount. The ubiquitous blue rock pigeon affords capital practice in some places at a time when no other shooting is possible ; but, of course, they must not be shot until the young birds can take care of themselves. In short, the man who knows where to look and what to look for will find that his gun will be idle for only about four months in the year, provided that he is in a locality where there is a variety of game, and is able to stand the heat of some of the hotter months. In proof of this I may say that I have shot snipe in Assam in every month of the year except May, June, and July, and I have no doubt that this could be done in many other parts of India. I have heard of big bags of snipe being made in the Dibrugarh and Sylhet districts of Assam late in April, when the birds are on their way to their breeding grounds in the north, and I have even known them to be shot in Assam and the Punjab as late as May. I have

shot duck from the beginning of October to the very end of March, and I have seen duck and teal on the Ganges at Allahabad late in April. Quail of one sort or another I have killed in every month except June. It need hardly be said that the greatest care should be exercised not to shoot birds in their breeding season. Duck (except the very few species that breed in India) and snipe are always in season, but before shooting quail out of the regular shooting season inquiries should be made regarding their breeding habits, which vary for the different species. The close season for most other varieties of Indian game birds coincides approximately with that in England.

Fifthly, the small-game shooter is independent of companions. The man who is compelled to spend many weeks of each year in solitary camping, the man who finds himself posted to a station where he is the only English official or where his few compatriots are uncongenial, the tea-planter in Assam, the indigo-planter in Behar, the silk-factor in Eastern Bengal, the hundreds of Englishmen scattered throughout India who have to rely upon their own resources to find relaxation, have good cause to bless a wise Providence for populating the Indian peninsula with many a variety of game bird.

Lastly, and this is, perhaps, the most important consideration of all, the game birds of India—the bustards, the jungle fowl, the pea-fowl, the pheasants, the partridges, the quail, the sand-grouse, the duck, the snipe, the pigeons—afford additions to the *menu* that the most fastidious taste would not despise. How much more welcome, then, are they in a land

where skinny fowls and stringy goats' flesh form the staple diet of the alien white man?

And here let me offer a word of advice. Do not rashly reject on hearsay any game bird as inedible. Books on Indian sport will tell you that the brahminy duck is rank and fishy in taste, and that the shoveller is a filthy feeder and unfit for the table. The former bird, moreover, has a reputation for feeding on carrion which is most probably undeserved, and consequently seldom finds its way into the cooking-pot. Yet there was no greater favourite among the British Tommies in Allahabad than a fat brahminy, and I have known four hungry men arriving at their shooting camp ahead of their commissariat devour with extreme relish a stew composed of the despised shoveller. Shovellers shot off a stagnant village puddle should certainly not be taken home (although these birds are no less nice in their dining-room habits than the ordinary domestic duck), but I have eaten these handsome-plumaged duck shot off a clear stream and found them extremely palatable. Whistling teal, again, are popularly supposed to be uneatable, but, on the several occasions when I have tried them, I have found them little inferior to most other duck. For some inexplicable reason—possibly because it is a permanent resident in India—the grey duck, or spotted bill, is often regarded as unfit for food. As a matter of fact, this duck is one of the very best for the table. Even the grey partridge and common Indian hare are sometimes rejected on account of their proclivities for foul feeding. But they may safely be eaten—and excellent food they afford—except, perhaps, when shot on the confines of a village. Perhaps the painted snipe lives up to

its reputation for unpalatableness more consistently than any other Indian game bird, and when flushed should be allowed to continue its wretched, slow-flapping flight without molestation.

It may, I think, be taken as a general axiom that *any* ducks which frequent fresh water or marshland, well away from the nearest village are eatable, but at the same time it is unnecessary to shoot any of the inferior kinds (from the culinary point of view) when there is a plethora of others. A certain number of the less edible kinds of duck will inevitably find their way into every big bag, but their proportion can be considerably reduced by care. Whistling teal, for instance, are easily distinguishable by reason of their peculiar flight and call, brahminy ducks and comb-ducks by their size, the cotton teal may be known by its diminutiveness and low darting flight, while the observant sportsman will soon learn to recognise the general appearance of the shoveller. It is also well to bear in mind that ducks and geese shot on the big rivers frequently have a fishy flavour. This fact, combined with the great difficulty of approaching within range of the birds, makes the shooting of them on an open river rather an unsatisfactory proceeding.

In this connection a plea against unnecessary slaughter may not be out of place. When birds are numerous it is naturally tempting to go on shooting. But the sportsman will be well advised to put a check on his natural inclinations and limit his bag to actual requirements. However much pleasure the killing of a quantity of birds may afford at the time, it will to a great extent be discounted if they cannot be disposed of. Of course, if a man is

shooting from or can send in his game *quickly* (and game *must* be sent quickly in India, even in the middle of the cold weather) to a good sized station, he will have no difficulty in disposing of as much as he can shoot. But no sportsman worthy of the name can fail to feel remorse if the birds which he has killed do not eventually appear at his own table or those of his friends.

One more word before leaving the culinary aspect of my subject. Game cannot be expected to remain good as long in India as in the British Isles, and it is wise to eat it before it becomes high. In many parts of India, birds will not keep for more than a day or two, but it is surprising how long they may be kept in the cold weather of Northern India, when, if cleaned, hung carefully in a cool airy place, and, if necessary, partially cooked, birds shot on Sunday will remain good for the rest of the week. Big birds, especially duck and geese, should always be cleaned before sending them away even in the coldest weather.

These, then, are some of the considerations that place small-game shooting in the forefront of Indian sports. I have not attempted to define the peculiar charm that attaches to the actual shooting, which indeed defies description. Enough to say that for the enthusiast the delight is always present, and that the duffer experiences it as keenly as the brilliant performer. It is a sport for the poor man, the busy man, the lonely man, the man who is fond of healthy exercise, the naturalist; a sport which can be enjoyed in most places and at many seasons of the year, a sport which takes a man away from the monotonous routine of station life, and braces

him for the work of the coming week, a sport which often leads a man into interesting and picturesque country and introduces him to conditions of Indian life of which he would otherwise remain in ignorance, and a sport which in its successful accomplishment brings release from the eternal *murghi* and *bakri ke bijsteak*.

## CHAPTER II.

### SHOOTING GROUNDS AND TRANSPORT.

THE embryo sportsman who comes out to India with the impression that he has only to stroll outside his bungalow with a gun to shoot as much as he can is doomed to disappointment. Every paddy field does not hold snipe, nor every mustard or cotton crop partridges and hares. You may walk through many a mile of wheat without flushing a single quail, and scan many a likely looking tank without seeing a single duck. Yet the chances are that some or all of these varieties of game are to be found within easy reach at the proper seasons and in the right places. Occasionally, no doubt, fortune favours an inexperienced sportsman, who, setting about the quest of gamewithout method or knowledge, stumbles upon it by good fortune; but such cases are exceptional, and at first he will have to seek help from someone who knows the shooting resources of the neighbourhood. The probability is that a new arrival at an Indian station will soon find someone who will take him out and show him sport. But it may be that he will be in a small station where no cicerone is available, or in a large station where it takes time to make friends with a man who is willing and able to shoot with him. In these circumstances he must make the most of such hints and scraps of information as he can gather. And if he can learn



INDIAN JUNGLE FOWL (*Gallus bankiva*)





nothing from his own people he must make inquiries from the people of the country. This latter may be a lengthy and patience-trying process, as the native mind is not always sympathetic in matters of sport. I once asked an old Hindu gentleman whether the pigeons which haunted a certain office building had ever been shot, as I wished to thin out the birds, which were becoming a regular nuisance, if I could do so without offending native sentiment. "No," he replied, "I don't remember that the pigeons were ever shot!" Then, as a happy afterthought, he added, "But Mr. Tomkins caught a small squirrel here once!" The connection between squirrel catching and pigeon shooting is not obvious to the Western mind, but there was evidently nothing incongruous to my informant in the association of the two forms of sport, and this remark of a highly educated and exceedingly shrewd man exemplifies the sort of information that may be given to inquiries regarding the shooting in any particular neighbourhood.

At the same time, though you will probably do little or nothing without help, do not too readily accept what you hear about the shooting in any locality. It is not uncommon to be told that it is mere waste of time to take out a gun. Advice of this sort is usually given by men who have only been out once or twice, and have been dissatisfied with the results of the day's bag, either because they are not sufficiently keen to appreciate the delights of a small day, or have happened to go to a place which for some reason or other has not fulfilled expectations, or by men who have never taken the trouble to verify the unfavourable reports of others, or by men

who know nothing and care less about shooting, and occasionally—very occasionally—by men who know the resources of the neighbourhood and jealously try to conceal their knowledge from outsiders. Secrecy of this nature is legitimate enough within certain limits. The man who has discovered a good place for himself would be foolish to share his knowledge with one and all. Such altruism would inevitably result in the good place soon ceasing to remain good. But these secret preserves do not exist in an otherwise gameless country, and there are always places which can be shown to novices and new-comers which are at any rate good enough to afford an excuse for taking out a gun and to give a man a start.

I well remember my first day's shoot from Allahabad. A stranger in the place and having been accustomed to spend nearly every Sunday and holiday in my last station in shooting expeditions, I was depressed by the knowledge that there must be some sort of shooting in the neighbourhood if only I knew where to go. Indefatigable inquiries from every new acquaintance met with the invariable reply that there was no shooting ground that could be visited within the day, that it was a poor neighbourhood for shooting, that every place within a thirty mile radius had been shot out, and so on. At last someone did suggest that there was snipe ground within reach, but discouraged any attempt to try it, as it was being constantly shot. The very name of the place—the Subalterns' *Phil*—did not inspire confidence. However, here was something definite to go upon, and the information was supplemented by a recommendation to make inquiries from a man

who knew all the shooting grounds in the district. Accordingly, I interviewed this man whose report was far from encouraging. All the places he recommended entailed a long journey, camping out, and an intimate knowledge of the country. They were therefore impossible. He strongly advised a visit to the Subalterns' *Jhil* as being waste of time, and suggested my trying a place in the opposite direction. I decided to follow his advice, and told him so. However, on reconsideration, I determined to give the Subalterns' *Jhil* a trial, as it was considerably nearer, and the following morning saw me driving down the Cawnpore Road in a hired *gharry*. I had little hope of making a bag, but it was joy enough to feel that I was going to spend a non-working day tramping over a marsh with a gun in my hand instead of paying a round of calls in the station. The *jhil* lay half a mile from the road, and there was no lack of guides, as the *gharry* was surrounded by a crowd of potential *shikaris* as soon as it stopped at the adjacent village. I soon found that I was not likely to be disappointed. The snipe were naturally extremely wild, but there were plenty of them, and by lunch time I had shot the best of the ground, and, for an indifferent shot, made quite a respectable bag. I was just making my way to the other end, which the coolies said might be counted on to hold a few birds, when who should turn up but the man who had assured me that the *jhil* was not worth shooting over! By mutual agreement I left him to go over my old ground, but the few birds that had remained were by this time almost unapproachable, and the reports of his gun which came to my ears were few and far between. No longer did I

contemplate my sojourn in Allahabad with despondency as I made the return journey with nine and a half couple of snipe, a brace and a half of grey partridges, two pigeons and a quail, upon my game-stick. No doubt there are some who would scoff at a bag of these dimensions, and consider a day ill-spent which could not furnish a better result: but I venture to assert that it is bags of this nature and made under similar conditions that give most pleasure to real lovers of shooting.

This was my initiation into the shooting round Allahabad, and was the first of many excursions which were conducted on every available opportunity during the next fifteen months. Snipe and duck gave sport from early October to the last days of March, partridges and sand-grouse helped to give variety to the cold weather bags, the grey quail came in as the duck and snipe departed, the rain quail enlivened a goodly part of the rainy season, pigeons were shot in September. Old haunts were visited again and again, new grounds were exploited, and rarely did we return without disproving, to our own satisfaction at least, the allegation that the shooting round Allahabad was not worth going after.

There was one place in particular within a couple of hours' drive of the station where five of us on one memorable day killed 108 duck, fifty teal, four geese, and eighteen snipe, and where another gun and myself picked up twenty-five couple of snipe, and lost many more in the long grass later in the season. And this place (the ground was extensive and could accommodate several parties), though constantly shot by the few who knew of it, never

to my knowledge failed to give satisfaction as long as the water remained.

But of all the places in the immediate neighbourhood we held the Subalterns' *Jhil* in the most affectionate regard. It was really a wonderful place. A dozen miles or so from a large civil and military station and very accessible, it seems almost incredible that it could have shown such consistently good sport as it did. Though primarily a snipe *jhil* and always holding a plentiful supply of these birds, it could be relied upon to provide other welcome additions to the bag. We soon learned that the fields bordering the marsh were full of quail. Several small pieces of water dotted about on the *jhil* itself were favourite haunts of duck and teal. Pigeons at certain times visited the ground in great numbers; while a few grey partridges, and an occasional hare, always rewarded a beat through a patch of scrub and grass jungle by the side of the road. But, unfortunately, the Subalterns' *Jhil* is now a place of the past. The marsh is drained and given over to cultivation, and the old *jhil*, which a few years ago used to witness the expenditure of thousands of cartridges in the course of the shooting season, is now but an abiding memory to those who owed many a happy day's sport to its existence.

I have quoted these personal experiences (and similar instances could be multiplied) at one typical Indian plains station to illustrate the truth of my assertion that it is unwise to place undue reliance upon untested reports regarding the small game shooting in any locality. Incidentally they also demonstrate two other interesting and instructive facts. The first is the surprising callousness, which so many Europeans

in India display towards a sport which would go far to alleviate the ennui of which they so often complain. I could tell of a place within four miles of Nagpur—another large station—where in a year's shooting another man and myself killed some 300 head of snipe, quail, duck, sand-grouse, painted partridges, and hares, and where we were so certain of having the ground to ourselves that we rarely troubled to go elsewhere, except when the ground required a rest.

The second is the extraordinary amount of "hammering" which some grounds will bear. If all the men in Allahabad who professed to be keen on shooting had taken the trouble to go out regularly, even the Subalterns' *Jhil* would have been ruined. But even as it was, rarely a week passed without its being shot over at least once, and frequently two separate parties would turn up on the same day and share the ground. And yet the birds were always there, though, of course, in nothing like the numbers that would have been the case had the knowledge of the *jhil's* existence been confined to one or two happy individuals. However, the grounds that will bear this sort of continual hammering are few and far between, and the best results will usually be obtained by shooting different grounds in rotation as far as possible.

When you have been given a start by being introduced to the well-known grounds in the neighbourhood, you will be able to look about for yourself. You may find that the stereotyped places are good enough, but the search for new ground is always interesting, and the discovery of some unexploited or little-known place by one's own exertions cannot

fail to afford pleasure, even if the yield of game is comparatively insignificant. If one is shooting from a large station, there is always the risk of disappointment when visiting a recognised ground. Another party may have arrived beforehand, or have just left. In either case, you are not likely to have a very successful day unless the ground is out of the ordinary. But if you have your pet preserve, you can visit it without fear of interruption: you can take your time getting there, you can "nurse" it as much as you like, and you will regard the bags you get off it with peculiar satisfaction.

If you can get no hint of fresh fields in the station itself, go out exploring on your own account. Keep a sharp look out from the train windows when you are travelling by rail in the neighbourhood. You will often spot likely looking snipe ground, or see duck circling about. Bicycle or drive along the roads leading out of the station with both eyes open. Ride over the country. Explore the rivers in the neighbourhood: you may find back-waters where duck and geese congregate and are approachable. Small patches of unsuspected snipe ground often lie on or near river banks. Scrub jungle and *j'how* are favourite haunts of partridge, quail, and hares, especially if near water. Blue rocks frequent ruined buildings and disused wells. Keep your ears open no less than your eyes. A large flock of green pigeons may be invisible in a *pipul* tree, but they will give themselves away by whistling. You will find them there, or hard by, if you come again. The distinctive cry of sand-grouse passing overhead may lead you to their watering place. If there are partridges in the vicinity you will hear them calling



in the early mornings and evenings. Similarly with quail. Any likely looking piece of snipe ground should be examined for borings, and feathers on the margin of water will show whether the place is ever frequented by duck. And make inquiries from the peasants wherever you go.

I have said that information from English sources frequently errs on the side of pessimism. The converse is equally true of information given by the uneducated native rustic. To the ordinary villager every bird which frequents the water is a duck, and every bird with a bill longer than the normal a snipe. Add to this natural ignorance of the rudiments of natural history a total disregard for the seasons and a universal desire to please, and it is not surprising that the inexperienced sportsman who has set out to some far distant and vaguely indicated happy hunting ground, with his spirits buoyed up by the glowing accounts of his dusky informant, too often returns with the barrels of his gun as clean as when he started. What may have been good snipe ground after a plentiful monsoon, or at an earlier season of the year, is now a parched plain; the snipe or duck ground may be there, but its only denizens are snippets, paddy-birds, and coots, or, most likely of all, the legions of feathered game have existed only in the fertile imagination of the humble tiller of the soil. We have all suffered disappointment in this way, and the novice will soon learn to accept all information elicited from *ryots* with a grain of salt, and to test its accuracy, as far as possible, in the light of a few simple questions, such as "What are these birds like?" "How big are these snipe?" "When did you see them last?" "Do Sahibs ever

come here to shoot them ?” He will also probably ask how far off the place is, but if he elicits any reply other than that conveyed by an outstretched arm, accompanied by a peculiar noise like the rising intonation of a Brahmaputra steamer’s syren, it will in nine cases out of ten be the statement of a stereotyped distance corresponding to, and in the result proving about as reliable as, the Irishman’s “a mile and a bitty.”

However, quests based on native *khubber* do not always prove wild-goose chases. Most valuable information is often obtained in this way, and no one can afford to disregard hints given by natives, especially when volunteered. Frequently sport would be otherwise unobtainable. Only remember not to be too sanguine when following up these hints, and if you persevere in your search for virgin ground, and are not discouraged by the tardy arrival of success, the day will surely come when you will light upon some spot where you may shoot with little fear of disturbance. Of course there is a chance that you will have discovered someone else’s preserve. This is unlucky for the other person, but, at all events, it is better to share the knowledge of a shooting ground with a few than with many.

It may be objected that the search for new ground is likely to prove too lengthy a business for most men to undertake. This is true to a certain extent. The average sportsman would be unwilling to spend his holidays in scouring the country looking for birds when he might be shooting them elsewhere. But a great deal may be achieved in the way of inquiry and exploration in the course of a day’s shooting, in the early mornings and afternoons of ordinary days,

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and at seasons of the year when no shooting is to be had.

A few words of information regarding different means of reaching one's shooting ground may be useful to the uninitiated.

If you are bound for a place which does not necessitate a railway journey from your own station, a variety of ways of getting there are open, the choice of which depends upon the condition of the roads to be traversed, the resources of the station in the matter of vehicles, the part of India in which you are stationed, the distance to be travelled, and the extent of your own means of transport.

In the first place there are your own conveyances, and you can ride, drive, motor, or bicycle according to circumstances. A motor is, of course, by far the most expeditious and luxurious method of conveyance, but its use is contingent upon the existence of a metalled road to within a reasonable distance of the ground. A good road is also essential to the use of a smart trap with rubber tyres and good springs. A buggy has the advantage of a hood, but gives little room for guns, food, ammunition, and game. The roomier a trap is the better, as one must have a certain amount of impedimenta, and it is better to take along a supplementary vehicle than risk the discomfort of overcrowding. A bamboo cart is a useful article, as it can be taken over almost any road, and if a net is slung beneath the body it will usually hold all that is required. Ponies can, of course, go over any country, and bicycles wherever there is a beaten track. But it is unwise to ride or bicycle any considerable distance before or after a tiring day's shooting unless other means of transport

are out of the question. It is, however, often convenient to have ponies waiting to convey one the last few miles across country.

As regards hired vehicles, your choice will depend upon the resources of the *bazaar* and the other circumstances I have already enumerated. *Fitan-gharries*, *bund-gharries* of different classes, *bazaar tum-tums*, pony and bullock *tongas*, and *ekkas* are among the vehicles that you may expect to use at different times.

*Fitan-gharries* are large, well-padded, landau-like carriages drawn by a pair of ponies. They are extremely comfortable and roomy, but are expensive to hire, and cannot be taken over bad roads. These vehicles, moreover, are only available in a few of the big stations in Northern India.

*Bund-gharries*, or closed carriages of a more or less uniform pattern, are procurable in almost any station in India. They are not comfortable, and are cramped inside, but have plenty of room on the outside for luggage, though it is unfair on the wretched little ponies to overload them.

*Bazaar tum-tums* and *tongas* are of various sorts and sizes, the former being usually fashioned like a miniature waggonette, and drawn by a single pony, while the latter are hooded vehicles with one seat beside the driver and two behind. The ordinary *tonga* has a pole and bar, and is drawn by two ponies, but there is a species of light *bazaar tonga* drawn by a single pony which is quite a satisfactory conveyance to take out shooting, as it can go over any sort of track, is fairly comfortable and roomy, and can be hired cheaply.

*Byle tongas*, which are extensively used in the

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Central Provinces, are cumbrous, heavy vehicles, with substantial hoods, drawn by a pair of trotting bullocks, and are built on the lines of a hill-road *tonga*. They are comfortable and roomy, but the deliberate pace and vagaries of the bullocks, especially in the hands of an unskilful driver, are exasperating in the extreme.

*Ekkas*—the common vehicle of the people in Northern India—can be had everywhere throughout the Punjab and United Provinces, but their use is not recommended when other conveyances are procurable. They are, however, useful for carrying impedimenta, and can be hired very cheaply.

Finally, if you are stationed in a water district you may have to make your way to your shooting ground by river, instead of by road, and circumstances will decide whether you will travel by steamer, launch, or country-boat.

So much for journeying in the immediate neighbourhood of a station. Out in the district the choice of conveyances is naturally more limited. Here again you may find your own bicycle or ponies useful, but more probably you will make use of a country conveyance. Country ponies or *tats* are procurable in many villages, and are extremely useful for getting over country where wheeled conveyances cannot go. Of the latter the *ekka* is practically the only vehicle obtainable in the Punjab or United Provinces, when away from the larger towns. These ramshackled contrivances, shaped like an inverted box on two wheels and surmounted by a dingy canopy, the harness usually mended by bits of string, and the reins more often than not consisting of pieces of rope, though capable of

accommodating a whole family of natives squatting close together in apparent comfort, are peculiarly ill adapted to give the white man an easy ride. If you have an *ekka* to yourself you may with luck so dispose your person that you will have a tolerable journey, but if you share it with another you must resign yourself to the inevitable. Everyone has their own favourite position in an *ekka*, some reclining on one elbow, some sitting with their feet hanging over the side, some sitting propped against the back with their legs stuck straight in front of them; but few maintain their original position for many miles. A good deal may be done to lessen the discomfort with the aid of pillows, and I have actually managed to sleep in a pillow-padded *ekka* after a particularly tiring day's shooting. I once travelled in a private *ekka* which had foot-rests on either side. This excellent contrivance had the effect of turning the *ekka* into the semblance of an Irish car and made an astonishing difference in its comfort. The amount of work that some *ekka* ponies are capable of accomplishing and the pace that they can sometimes maintain are truly wonderful. I have been drawn by an *ekka* pony little larger than a big Newfoundland dog at a rate of ten miles an hour, and I have travelled twenty-three miles over a bad road in three hours and a half behind a similar pony without the little animal showing any signs of distress.

You will probably think an *ekka* the most uncomfortable vehicle in the universe, until you have sampled a Central Provinces *chukra*. This consists of little more than a couple of planks upon two wheels, drawn by a pair of trotting bullocks. It is

capable of going over any sort of country without upsetting, and is calculated to bruise, jolt, jar, and otherwise hurt every portion of one's anatomy in the process.

Elephants often have to be used in many parts of India. They are sometimes provided with *howdahs*, but usually have pads or huge mattresses roped on their backs. This method of progress is comfortable enough, but tedious.

Camels are extensively used in Sind and other parts of India, the sportsman sitting astride behind the driver. Their swaying motion often gives rise to unpleasant sensations at first, but one soon gets accustomed to it.

Perhaps the most luxurious and convenient method of shooting in the district is to travel in the company of a railway official. You will then be independent of tents, dāk bungalows, and railway station waiting-rooms or platforms. The private carriage with its attendant kitchen and servants quarters is shunted into a siding and detached from the train, while you lie comfortably in bed instead of being hustled out into the midnight air just as you have fallen asleep, and in the early morning you will proceed to the shooting ground by trolley, or whatever mode of conveyance circumstances demand, with your eye cleared by that most important desideratum for a successful day's sport—a good night's rest.







RUDDY SHEIDRAK OR BRAHMINY DUCK (*Cayaca ntila*)

## CHAPTER III.

### SNIPE.

IT will, I think, be generally conceded that the snipe holds pride of place among Indian game birds. Year after year, from farthest north to extreme south, wherever there is suitable feeding ground, myriads of snipe, flocking from their unknown breeding grounds in Central Asia, spread over the whole of the Indian peninsula.

It is this quality of universal ubiquity more than any other that entitles the snipe to the first place. There are many districts where duck never resort. Quail, sand-grouse, and partridges, especially the two former, are all more or less locally distributed. But the snipe is found everywhere, and the game-book of almost every sportsman will show that he has killed more snipe than any other sort of game.

There is, moreover, a charm about snipe shooting that is peculiarly its own. It is not that the Indian snipe is a particularly difficult bird to hit, though he is sufficiently so to satisfy most men, nor that his pursuit is usually undertaken in romantic surroundings. But the sudden rapidity of his rise, the swiftness and eccentricities of his flight, the variety of the shots he affords, the uncertainty of whether the next bird will spring from your feet, or a hundred yards ahead of you, whether he will rise without a sound, or throw away his life by emitting

his grating cry as he rises after you have walked right over him, whether, when you have missed him, he will fly out of sight or settle within a short distance, or, having flown till he is an almost indistinguishable speck, will suddenly turn and drop accommodately in the line you are taking, whether he will rise singly or in wisps—these are some of the reasons that make snipe-shooting the fascinating sport it is.

And then what a thorough little sportsman the snipe is! He is a sportsman on the wing—a game bird if ever there was one. And he looks a sportsman on the shooting-stick—a sportsman and an aristocrat to the tip of his long bill. Anglo-Indians have good cause to love the snipe, and I may be forgiven for waxing enthusiastic over him.

Although there are no fewer than six varieties of snipe found in India, namely the wood snipe, solitary snipe, fan-tail snipe, pin-tail snipe, jack snipe, and painted snipe, we need only consider two: the full snipe (whether it be fan-tail or pin-tail) and the jack snipe. Many Indian sportsmen of experience have never seen a wood snipe, although the bird is fairly common in parts of Assam. The solitary snipe is so rarely met with that the man who bags one is lucky. The painted snipe has nothing to recommend him except his handsome plumage.

For all intents and purposes, then, all Indian sportsmen divide snipe into full or jack. The former is nearly double the size of the latter, and has a far more rapid and twisty flight. Some men do not think a jack snipe worth powder and shot. He is certainly a minute bird, but what there is of him is very toothsome. When full snipe are plentiful the

jacks may be allowed to escape, but it sometimes happens that the latter preponderate, and that the bag would be meagre if they were spared. For instance, on one occasion I killed twenty jacks out of a bag of twenty-five snipe, on another, eleven jacks out of sixteen, and on a third twenty jacks out of twenty-eight.

The chief peculiarities of the jack are that he is mute, lies very close, rarely flies for a long distance, and usually gets well up in the air with a straightway flight. Under normal conditions he affords an easy enough mark for a slow, poking shot, but when there is a high wind blowing, and the jacks are drifting about like dried leaves in a gale, they will tax the powers of the best shot.

The aversion of the jack to fly right away is most marked. However confiding full snipe may be, they will usually get tired of being shot at more than two or three times, and betake themselves to a less disturbed area. But the one idea of the jack seems to be to settle down again as quickly as possible, and half a dozen of these birds will give a thoroughly bad shot employment for the whole day.

Nevertheless, in spite of the merits of the jack, his abundance in certain places and his general recognition as a component factor in a day's snipe shooting, when a man speaks of snipe he means full snipe, and the following remarks apply to full snipe only.

No one who has done much snipe shooting in India can fail to be struck by the extraordinary ignorance that so many people display about a snipe's identity. The remark of the British Tommy to the effect that "a snipe is easy to 'it if you wait

till 'e 'overs" is typical of this. And I have known others than Tommies draw a bead upon a pied kingfisher as he was hovering over the water preparatory to making an unerring dive upon some unsuspecting fish beneath him. I have rarely known a Eurasian who was able to identify a snipe. "Yes, I have got a good bag of greater and lesser snipe," said a Eurasian sportsman to a friend of mine, and, in proof of his assertion, displayed a variety of waders ranging in size from a sandpiper to a crane. I once went out shooting with two keen Eurasian sportsmen who professed to be thoroughly familiar with everything appertaining to snipe shooting, and promised to show me good sport. They took me to village ponds and other pieces of water which snipe are not in the habit of frequenting, inviting me at intervals to shoot at all manner of long-billed birds, and when by chance I did discover a likely looking bit of ground nothing would induce them to accompany me through it. Even men who have shot snipe are so unobservant as not always to be able to recognise snipe, either alive or dead. There was a man who for some days carried on a bitter feud with his best friend because the latter refused to eat some snipe he had sent him on the ground that they were snippets. And yet the man who spurned the gift had shot not a few snipe.

This ignorance, or, perhaps, I ought to say difficulty in recognising a snipe, is remarkable—at any rate in the case of dead birds. No other bird, except other varieties of the species, is really like a snipe. The snippet, which is the bird most commonly mistaken for a snipe, is no more like a snipe than a lark is like a quail. At the same time

mistakes are sometimes excusable in the case of birds on the wing. There is no mistaking the normal flight of a snipe, but their flight is not always normal. I remember being out once with two experienced snipe shots when a bird was flushed by the dog at extreme range, and was variously identified as a plover, a painter, and a wood snipe. We flushed it again out of range, and unanimously agreed that it was a wounded full snipe. The third time it rose quite close, and was palpably an unwounded full snipe. The flight of this bird was certainly abnormal on the first two occasions on which it rose. It was doubtless lazy, and this accounted for its slow, flapping flight, until at the third time of flushing it was thoroughly roused, and made off in the normal manner of a full snipe. But what struck me as remarkable was the difference of size that this bird presented. I plead guilty to being the one who mistook it in the first instance for a plover, and to my eyes it looked quite as big as one. And yet, when it rose just before it was bagged, there was no doubt of its real identity. This is by no means the only time that a snipe on the wing has appeared to me larger or smaller than it actually was. I have mistaken full snipe for jack and *vice versa*, and I have known others fall into similar error. Nor is this entirely a matter of light. On very hot, sunny days, when the shimmer of the heat haze and the glitter of the water combine to deceive the eye, one may be excused for shooting at anything. Anyone who has shot on an up-country *jhil* in mid-October can appreciate the story of the man who flung down his gun at lunch time with the remark, "I don't mind loosing off at small birds,

and I don't mind shooting at dragon-flies, but when it comes to trying to hit liver-spots it is time to stop."

I have already alluded to the eccentricities of flight in which snipe sometimes indulge. For some mysterious reason the snipe of the Khasia Hills, in Assam, usually fly quite unlike their brethren in the plains, and I have known experienced sportsmen, at their first introduction to these leisurely, mute hill birds, to be completely nonplussed by their strange behaviour, and question whether they were really the same birds that they had been accustomed to shoot in other climes.

Nevertheless, although the novice will probably slay birds of some other genus in his early days, and may even make an occasional mistake after passing the novitiate stage, he will soon, unless he is peculiarly unobservant, learn to recognise a snipe alive or dead.

Everyone, whether he has shot snipe or not, knows that they frequent marshy ground, and it is in marshy ground that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they must be sought, though occasionally the birds will lie up during the day in dry cover near their nightly feeding ground. This, however, is so exceptional that it need not be considered, and when I speak of snipe ground it will be understood that I mean marshy or "*ponky*" ground.

Snipe ground may be good for snipe, but bad for the snipe shooter, and *vice versa*.

Ideal snipe ground for shooting purposes must afford good walking, and sufficient but not excessive cover. Walking is easy when the water and mud do not come above the top of the boot. The greater

the depth of the "*ponk*" after this point the greater is the strain imposed upon the legs, and a tired man cannot hit snipe satisfactorily.

Too much water is bad, because the splashing alarms the birds and makes them rise wild. Besides, snipe are not aquatic birds. They lie in swampy ground because they find their food there, but they are only found in patches of cover above the water level. It is, therefore, mere waste of time, to walk through bare, open stretches of water, with perhaps a few reeds or grasses showing above the top, although *quasi-shikaris* will sometimes try to induce their patrons to do so.

Thick, clinging mud means bad walking. Nothing is so tiring as having to pull out your feet with a plop from sticky mud at every step.

Black cotton soil, with its deep, unsuspected holes, is very bad, and the sportsman should proceed with extreme caution when walking over this sort of ground.

Flooded rice stubble usually affords easy walking and the right amount of cover. Sometimes, however, the going is treacherous, and there is too much water and too little cover. Dry rice stubble is of course hopeless.

Growing rice or *paddy* crops afford sometimes good and sometimes very bad walking, according to the nature of the soil and the depth of the water. It is not a bad plan to walk along the protecting dams or *bhunds* if the going in the fields is bad. Dead birds require to be carefully marked if the rice is high.

Fallowland among rice fields always holds birds and usually fulfils the two essentials of ideal snipe ground.



Thick, high grass is bad for losing birds. So are tall reeds.

The best ground of all is that which is just soft enough to let the snipe bore comfortably without letting the sportsman sink in over his boots, with a few inches of water, and sufficient cover (for instance, grass tussocks) to give the birds suitable hiding without causing trouble and delay in finding dead and wounded birds.

However, the snipe shooter cannot pick his ground as a rule. He must go where the birds are, and, if they are on ground such as I have just described, he will be lucky.

One word of warning. Beware of bright green patches in marsh-land. If you venture on one of them you may be up to your neck in liquid slime before you know where you are. I have vivid recollections of an incautious fellow-sportsman stalking about in a towel and *sola topee* under a Punjab mid-October sun through mistaking one of these innocent looking spots for *terra firma*.

Opinions vary as to the most suitable clothes to wear for snipe shooting. Personally, I have found a pair of old walking boots to be more satisfactory than any other footwear. Waterproof shooting boots are, in my opinion, a mistake. They are far too heavy, and when once water has got in over the tops it won't come out again. Old walking boots, on the other hand, are sure to be comfortable, and possess the additional advantage of not retaining a super-abundance of water.

Thick woollen socks should be worn for every sort of shooting. Putties are by far the best leg coverings. They afford protection from the sun,

insects, spear-grass, sharp-edged reeds, *jhil* itch, and, according to popular report, snakes. Football shorts and stockings are cool and comfortable, but do not give immunity from the above pests. Leather gaiters are obviously quite unsuitable.

Knickerbockers and coat can be made of any of the numerous light cloths, twills, and drills that most *dharzies* or Indian tailors can procure. The knickerbockers should be of some washing material, and if it is waterproof so much the better. I have always found Burberrys' gabardines answer well. If the sun is hot it is advisable to wear a pad on the back of the coat to protect the spine.

A shooting seat will be found a useful adjunct to snipe shooting. The line is constantly halting to look for dead birds, and the possessor of a shooting-seat is able to snatch a few minutes' rest, the beneficial effect of which will be felt at the end of the day.

Nobody should go out snipe shooting without taking a complete change of clothes from the waist downwards. Inattention to this very necessary precaution is liable to lead to serious results.

Snipe usually lie well on still, warm days when there is good cover, and they have not been unduly harassed. Cold weather, absence of sun, a high wind, scanty cover, noise and perpetual harrying are all calculated to make them wild. Some of these adverse circumstances can be avoided, but too often the causes of wildness are beyond human control, and all that the sportsman can do is to use his wit in order to bring the birds within range.

To begin with, it is a good general rule not to start shooting snipe until the sun is well up. Of

course there are exceptions to this as to every rule, but the early morning snipe is an unsettled bird, and is very prone to rise wild and seek some other resting-place, if disturbed before he has disposed himself for the day.

Do not, then, enter your snipe ground before nine o'clock at the earliest, and take as few men with you as possible. A long line of beaters is quite out of place snipe shooting. I only know one part of India where snipe want to be routed out and that is in the Khasia Hills, where they often lie like stones.

Except when there is a large extent of ground to cover, a couple of beaters to each gun are quite enough, and the line should not be extended too far or else birds will be flushed out of range. Under ordinary conditions not more than two guns should shoot together. I would go even farther and say that the best method is to shoot snipe alone. Many sportsmen will disagree with this contention, but I maintain that the best results will be obtained by this unsociable method. A man shooting alone has absolute control of the beaters on either side of him. He can stop, go forward, wheel, and turn at a sign. He can command complete silence. He can pursue missed or wounded birds without considering a companion. And, above all, he can loose off the instant that a bird rises without waiting to consider whether it is his bird or not. To my mind, the most enjoyable arrangement is to start out with a companion, and on reaching the ground to separate, each taking a distinct beat. Lunch can be eaten together at a convenient spot, and afterwards the same plan can be continued, or the guns can shoot together as fancy or expediency dictate.

It is a good rule always to proceed in absolute silence when in pursuit of snipe. And when snipe are wild this rule should be made an inflexible law. Nothing frightens snipe so much as talking and shouting.

As I have already said, undue splashing frightens snipe. It often pays to walk twenty or thirty yards ahead of your beaters, and to pick a dry course as far as practicable. This can be done in *paddy* crops and stubble, or wherever there are irrigation canals and *bhunds*. In this way you may get on terms with birds which would not give you a chance if you remained in line with the beaters.

It is not a bad plan to carry a number of cartridges loaded with large shot (sixes or even fives) when birds are expected to be wild, and to keep one in the choke barrel, or, if they consistently rise at long range, in both barrels. An alternative is to keep a stock of specially loaded cartridges, but be sure that your gun is strong in the breech before experimenting with special loads.

It is sometimes possible to manœuvre birds which are wild on account of scanty cover into cover in which they will lie well, just as in England, when walking up partridges, we drive them off stubble into roots.

If birds are hopelessly wild, and the nature of the ground permits, driving may be attempted. I can speak with little authority on this method, as my own few efforts in this direction have not met with conspicuous success. But I have heard others say that they have had snipe driven to them successfully, and, if suitable cover for the guns can be found, a drive is always worth trying as a last resource. Care

should be taken to note the general line of flight of the birds carefully, and very clear instructions should be given to the beaters. I fancy that one of the chief causes of failure is the omission on the part of the beaters to carry out their instructions intelligently.

When shooting wild snipe in a high wind some advocate walking down wind, as snipe rise against the wind before flying away. It is, however, I think, a better plan to walk up wind, as the birds are not so sensible of your approach. Moreover, they naturally cannot fly at such a pace against a strong wind as with it. It is not, however, possible to lay down any hard and fast rule in this respect, as the position of the sun, the lie of the land, the extent of the ground, and other circumstances must be taken into consideration.

When birds are scarce it is advisable to mark down any that escape, however far off they may settle. The purpose of this is not only to pursue individual birds, but to discover fresh ones, as snipe usually settle in suitable snipe ground where other snipe are likely to be found. The snipe of the Khasia Hills are exceptional in this as in most other respects, for as often as not they will settle, after being flushed, on the hill sides, in bushes, dry crops, and other astonishing places.

Another very important point to remember, and one that is frequently neglected, is to watch any snipe that you have not obviously missed. It is surprising how often snipe will carry on for quite a considerable distance before collapsing, and these are by no means always the palpably hit birds.

Still more important is it to follow, without exception, every bird that you wound. Never mind if this

takes you far out of your course. Anything is better than to leave a bird to a lingering death without making an effort to find it. And a wounded snipe, unless the cover is thick, is not as a rule a difficult bird to find. He is not like a partridge or quail, which may run for any distance, and will crouch in the thickest cover they can find, where pursuit without a dog is almost hopeless. A wounded snipe rarely runs from the spot where he has settled, and, moreover, will often reveal himself by jumping about and squawking when you approach if he is unable to fly. In fact, you have more chance of retrieving a wounded snipe than a dead one, and that is more than can be said for any other Indian game bird.

If there are hawks about in your snipe ground, and there usually are, take care that they don't carry off your wounded and dead birds. Be ready to give them a barrel at the slightest indication of a desire to poach. It is not only when snipe shooting that hawks and similar predatory birds are a nuisance. I have had duck and teal carried off and devoured within sight; and once when I had hit a black partridge I heard a mighty rush over my head, and, before I realised what was happening, the partridge was seized by a kite before it touched the ground, and I had the mortification of seeing my bird torn to pieces at leisure on the top of a distant tree.

#### HINTS ON THE SHOOTING OF SNIPE.

Snipe shooting is sometimes said to be a knack. Perhaps it is. The fact remains that a good snipe shot is never a duffer at other birds. The man who pokes at his birds may be fairly successful at quail, partridges, and other straight flying birds, but he will

never be more than an indifferent performer at snipe.

I believe that a tyro in shooting should be introduced to snipe before anything else. He will thus have far less chance of yielding to his natural inclination to shut one eye and squint along the gun barrel than if he began, say, with quail shot with the aid of call birds. If snipe are wild or are "jinking," he will have little time or opportunity to draw a bead on the birds, and will perforce have to let his hand and eye act in simultaneous accord. Let him once get into this desirable habit and it will become second nature, whereas the fatal habit of "poking" instead of "snapping," which is the result of practising at straight away birds, is far more easily developed than eradicated.

As I have already said, the Indian snipe is not a particularly difficult bird to hit. By this I mean normally rising and flying birds shot under normal conditions of wind and weather. Wild snipe are difficult because they demand a quickness of hand and eye which must be inherent, and which practice alone will not entirely secure. Snipe which flap up at your feet are disconcerting because they afford a different sort of shot from those which the other snipe at which you have been firing afforded, and more especially because you have to wait until the birds are at a reasonable range. This waiting for birds is always calculated to put anyone off, and your annoyance if you miss is all the greater because the shot is so simple. You should make it a rule never to raise your gun in such cases until you are prepared to pull the trigger. It is the greatest mistake to keep your gun pointed at a bird until

he has passed out of "smashing" range. Snipe rising in wisps or in rapid succession are also harder to hit than birds which rise singly, because you are apt to be flustered, and to divide your attention between the birds. Most difficult of all are snipe which jink away fast and low over a dull coloured ground in a bad light. A high wind, besides being calculated to make snipe wild, is also liable to deflect the shot. Finally, there is no doubt that some snipe escape by flying through the pattern of the shot.

Do not be disheartened if you cannot hit them at first. If you persevere you will get into it. The majority of misses are due to shooting too far behind and too low. Keeping your left arm well extended is a good corrective of the latter error. You will learn a lot by watching where your shot strike when snipe are flying low over water, and still more by observing the methods of and taking hints from good snipe shots. We cannot all hope to become good snipe shots, but everyone, unless there is something radically wrong with his eyesight, can, and will with perseverance, become sufficiently proficient to obtain keen enjoyment from this grand sport.



## CHAPTER IV.

### DUCKS AND GEESE.

THERE are about a score of different varieties of duck which may be shot in India, the majority of which are cold weather visitors. An ordinary day's duck shoot in any part of India will result in the bagging of several varieties, and there is always the chance of one of the rarer species being secured. It is most interesting to classify the various species at the end of a day's shoot, and it is rather strange that so many men are content merely to say that they have bagged so many duck without making any attempt to discriminate between the different varieties.

There is usually no mistaking a duck when it has once been brought to bag, because of the general family resemblance in the bill to the common farm-yard variety, but there is a vast difference in plumage and general appearance between, say, the graceful pintail and the stockily-built pochard, and the novice is strongly recommended to learn the commoner varieties as soon as possible.

As there is plenty of excellent literature dealing with the characteristics of the Indian ducks, which can be consulted by anyone who is interested in the subject, I will content myself with mentioning a few of the attributes of some of the commoner varieties,



RED CRESTED POCHARD *Fuligula rufina*



as they affect the sportsman as apart from the naturalist.

The *Mallard*, which is the common wild duck of the British Isles, is in India more prized than, perhaps, any other duck. He is fairly common in Northern India, though not nearly so widely distributed as some other varieties. He is an excellent diver, and difficult to retrieve when wounded, a strong flier, one of the largest and most handsome of all the ducks, and shares with the teal the distinction of being the best Indian duck, if not game bird, for the table.

The *Pochards* are chiefly remarkable for their extraordinary powers of diving. A wounded pochard, except in clear, open water, is almost invariably lost. I once had a unique opportunity of observing a couple of wounded pochards performing under water. We were returning home along a canal bank at the end of a black partridge shoot when we spotted a small flock of common pochards on the water. We got out of the *ekkas*, stalked the birds, and gave them a volley. Two were killed, and two others wounded. The water in the canal was low and clear, and it was hard to believe that the two swiftly swimming forms which we watched, darting and doubling beneath the water, were really birds and not fish.

The *Pintail* is always a welcome addition to the bag. Though widely distributed all over the Peninsula, these duck know so well how to take care of themselves that, in proportion to their numbers, comparatively few usually find their way into the bag. If you try to approach duck on the water the pintail will be first on the wing, and when duck

are flying overhead the pintail will be flying highest and fastest of all.

The common *Teal* is probably the commonest duck in India, and will nearly always figure in any bag of duck. They are sometimes surprisingly confiding, sometimes the reverse. Teal are very fast and tricky fliers, and there is no more difficult shot than that presented by a single teal moving at top pace across the gunner. The chief peculiarity of their flight lies in their practice of towering as soon as you have fired your first barrel, and so quickly is this manœuvre executed that you must be smart with your second to catch them before they have climbed out of range. Teal fly very close together, and sometimes a surprising "family" shot can be brought off. For instance, I know two men who, as the result of four barrels, dropped twenty-two teal.

The *Cotton Teal*, or pigmy goose, is not a true duck at all, but a minute goose, as its bill indicates. It is much the smallest of all the duck tribe, weighing not more than two-thirds as much as the common teal. These birds, which breed in India, are widely distributed, and occur in great numbers in many parts of the United Provinces, Bengal, Assam, and the Central Provinces. It is not so common in the Punjab. They chiefly affect shallow, reedy *jhils* and tanks. They are easily distinguished by their small size, black and white appearance, and low, tricky flight. When other kinds of duck are present in any quantity cotton teal are usually left alone, as they are not considered good eating. They are certainly not so palatable as either garganey or common teal, but it is a great mistake to consider



COTTON TERA (*Nettapus coromandevianus*)



them not worth cooking. They give sporting shots, and are expert divers when wounded.

The *Grey Duck* or *Spotted Bill* is one of the few ducks that breed in India, and is much the best eating of these species. With the mallard it is the largest of the true ducks. When brought to bag it can be identified at once by the orange spot on the tip of its upper mandible. As a rule not shy, and not particularly fast on the wing, these birds are easily shot. They are very common in parts of the United Provinces and Assam, and particularly so in Manipur.

There are more ways of shooting duck than any other Indian game bird, the sportsman having to be guided in his choice by force of circumstances, such as the nature and general lie of the ground, and the existence of boats.

In some places the cream of the shooting can only be enjoyed in the very early morning, and, to a less extent, in the evening, as the birds fly away to other haunts during the day. In other places, especially on large *jhils* and *bhils* (these names are synonymous, the former being used in Northern India and the latter in Bengal to denote pieces of water and marshland varying in size, depth, and general configuration, and corresponding more or less to an English mere), and occasionally, on small ones which are particularly favoured by duck, shooting can be carried on all day—in the first instance because the birds will not leave the place, but merely keep flying from one part to another; and in the second, because, though they will fly away, they will keep returning at frequent intervals. The presence of a river or other water in the neighbourhood is an adverse factor to a successful day's



sport on a small *jhil*, as the duck have somewhere to go ; but if there are only two *jhils* at a convenient distance from each other, and the guns are divided between the two, the birds can be kept on the move backwards and forwards with most satisfactory results.

As regards those places where the duck shooting is practically limited to the early morning and evening, it is a fortunate circumstance that it is exceptional to find duck ground which does not also afford snipe shooting round the margins, and so, when the duck have departed, attention can be paid to the snipe.

The following are the principal methods of duck shooting with which I am personally acquainted :

#### SHOOTING ON OPEN WATER.

This is always a most unsatisfactory proceeding. By open water I mean a large stretch of water devoid of reeds or other cover—in fact, a glorified pond. Such pieces of water will often hold large quantities of duck, and consequently appear to the unthinking native mind ideal spots for *shikar*. Many a man has tramped for miles to such a place at the instigation of some native informant, only to find the duck basking on the water far out of range. The most that can be done in these circumstances is to hide as near the water's edge as possible in some crop or other convenient cover and try to get the birds driven over. Even so, you will be lucky to bag a single bird. If you were to visit the spot at the time of the morning or evening flight you might get a few shots, but in no circumstances whatever would you ever make anything of a bag in a place of this description.

## SHOOTING FROM BOATS.

Good bags are often made from boats, but the sportsman is handicapped by the cramped position in which he has to sit, and also by the great difficulty that is experienced in shooting at birds flying on the right-hand side. The form of boat is usually a clumsy, flat-bottomed craft propelled by a pole, the puntsman squatting in the stern, so as to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. The man with the gun sits in the bottom, probably in a couple of inches of water, and as the boat is usually not particularly steady it can easily be imagined that he has plenty of excuse for misses. Sometimes a couple of boats are joined together, and the sportsman sits on a plank between the two with a leg in each boat. This method gives more freedom of action, but renders the sportsman rather too conspicuous.

Some of the dug-outs in Bengal are the most ghastly contrivances, as, although the boatmen seem capable of performing any antics in them with impunity, if the uninitiated Englishman attempts to alter his position by the fractional part of an inch, he is in imminent danger of capsizing.

Some men have their own collapsible boats, and they ought to prove very useful, especially on water where native boats are not available.

I once went on a duck shoot run by a man who had discovered the ground, and who had evolved the brilliant idea of festooning a large country boat with reeds and grasses. His idea, which probably emanated from a hazy recollection of Red Indian methods, was that the duck would mistake the boat

for a floating mass of reeds and allow it to approach within range. On arriving at the scene of action we found that the natives to whom he had entrusted the order had followed their instructions with such zeal that the boat was completely covered in on all sides and at the top, without having a single loophole. In spite of the obvious absurdity of the scheme, the inventor of this horrible contrivance still pinned his faith to it, and insisted on proving its merits. One of the party, against his better judgment, consented to accompany him, while the fourth man and I remained on land, and managed to bag a few terror stricken duck and teal which flew madly in our direction in blind haste to escape the horror on the water.

This is of course an extreme instance, but it serves to accentuate the moral that the secret of boat shooting is to make the boat and occupants as inconspicuous as possible. Duck get used to native boatmen wandering about the *jhils* cutting reeds and fishing and do not show much fear of them. But the sight of a white face, western garb, or the glint of a gun barrel will put them on the *qui vive* at once. The sportsman should therefore take care to wear a *khaki* or neutral tinted cover to his *sola topee*, and clothes of an inconspicuous colour, and not to display his gun or move his position until he is going to shoot. These maxims apply to duck shooting in all cases. No game bird has a keener eye than the duck, and many a shot is lost from lack of reasonable caution.

A *jhil* with large reed patches intersected by narrow water-ways is the most suitable for boat-shooting. The boatman will cautiously pilot you

along the channels, and you must be ready the whole time, both for birds flying overhead and birds on the water in the numerous lagoons and bays into which the channels debouch. When duck are moving frequently overhead, as they will be if several guns are out in boats, it is better to lie up in the cover of the reeds. You will get most sporting shots in this way. When the birds cease moving, go on exploring the lagoons, and continue these manœuvres so long as there are sufficient birds left on the *jhil* to make it worth while.

On *jhils* without large reed patches, you will see the birds scattered about the water, and must take advantage of such cover as there is, in order to approach them.

Mud banks, masses of vegetation, and so on, will often enable you to get within range; but the shots which you will get in this way are not satisfactory—the right barrel into the brown, and the left as they rise—and will not afford a tithe of the enjoyment of the few overhead shots that will come your way. It is, moreover, a tedious business, especially in shallow water when the boat is constantly sticking. Here again, however, you will often have the chance of lying up in some sort of concealment, and getting sporting overhead shots.

A man shooting alone has little chance of doing much good in a boat, or, indeed, in most methods of duck shooting. The object to be aimed at is to get the birds well on the move between the different parts of the *jhil*, and the number of guns required to do this properly depends on the extent of the ground.

## SHOOTING ON ISLANDS AND IN HIDES.

Given enough birds this is the most satisfactory method from every point of view. Some *jhils* are peculiarly adapted by nature for duck shooting, being studded with small islands where the guns can sit concealed, either in natural cover or in pits dug in the ground. In shallow *jhils* where there are no islands, hides can be made of sunk barrels; and in partially dry *jhils*, butts of mud and grasses can be erected. Any artificial hides should be constructed some days before the place is shot to let the duck get used to them.

The plan which is usually adopted in this method of shooting is for all the guns to take up their positions, and then for one of them to set the duck moving by firing a shot. If there are a sufficient number of guns, nothing further may be required, but if the birds are able to congregate in some secluded part of the *jhil* where they are not disturbed, they must be stirred up by men in boats armed with guns and blank cartridges or fireworks, or, if the water is too shallow for boats, by coolies wading.

On a *jhil* that lends itself to this method of shooting, and which holds a large quantity of duck, splendid sport can be obtained, as the majority of shots are at fast-flying overhead birds which demand very straight powder. There is a large *jhil* studded with islands near Ahraura Road Station, in the Benares district of the United Provinces, which is ideal for this kind of shooting, and the string of *bhils* on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite Gauhati, in the Kamrup district of Assam, are almost

as well adapted by nature, and hold considerably more birds.

It will be understood that this method of shooting, to be successful, requires a sufficient number of guns and birds.

#### SHOOTING ROUND THE EDGES OF "JHILS."

This method must be adopted when boats are not available, and is only practicable on quite small *jhils* and usually for a limited time, the remainder of the day after the duck have departed being devoted to snipe or other small game.

I may, perhaps, be allowed a digression to apologise for the constant use of the word "usually." But the conditions of small-game shooting vary so enormously according to innumerable circumstances, that it is almost impossible to lay down hard and fast rules that are equally applicable in all cases, or to dogmatise upon any but a few points.

In the present instance I have qualified my statement because the best day's duck shooting that I ever enjoyed was conducted around the edges of a very small horseshoe-shaped *jhil*, which could be commanded with ease by five guns, and the sport continued, with little intermission, all day. Strangely enough, there were other *jhils* in the near neighbourhood, which, as far as I remember, were not being shot that day, and yet the duck kept coming back at frequent intervals. There must have been some irresistible fascination about the place that made it impossible for them to remain away. It is, however, distinctly unusual for duck to behave in this way on small *jhils*, and, as I said, the shooting will usually be limited.

The procedure is for the guns to enter the *jhil* very early in the morning; and bitter work it is to wade waist deep into an up-country *jhil* on a cold-weather dawn. The object is to get as near the centre of the *jhil* as possible, and take cover in a convenient reed clump. A shooting seat will be found a great boon in this sort of shooting. It can be placed in the raised mud at the base of the reeds, and will afford a comfortable resting place obviating the necessity of crouching in a cramped position. A pre-arrangement should be made as to who should fire the first shot, and the other guns should forbear to shoot before this signal, however tempting may be the chances that come their way. Sometimes a spit of land running into the *jhil* or a convenient *bhund* may offer a good position, and save the sportsman from entering the water; but, usually, he will find that to get near the flight of the birds he must be prepared to get thoroughly wet.

#### SHOOTING ON RIVERS.

I said in a previous chapter that duck shooting on big rivers is an unsatisfactory proceeding owing to the difficulty of getting within range of the birds. Duck sometimes congregate in vast flocks on rivers, especially late in the season, when the *jhils* are running dry, and the birds are preparing to depart to their breeding-grounds in the north. They are always particularly wary on these occasions, and rarely lie near any cover behind which they can be stalked. Sometimes they can be circumvented in a narrow backwater or side channel of the main stream, and I once enjoyed fair sport in a backwater of the Ganges just below Allahabad by sitting in a

depression in the sand by the water's edge and shooting at duck flying up and down the channel.

#### SHOOTING ON STREAMS.

This is a little practised but pleasant method of shooting duck. Little practised because of the scarcity of suitable streams, and pleasant because of the exercise and dry, easy walking. A winding stream with crops or other cover near the banks is most suitable. Not more than two guns are required for this sort of shooting—one on each side of the water—and they merely walk along the banks, shooting as opportunity offers.

#### FLIGHTING.

This method of shooting duck, which is so much resorted to in the British Isles, is not much practised in India. No doubt the chief reason for this is that, whereas flighting gives the ordinary shore-shooter at home his best chance of getting on terms with duck which have been out at sea or on the mud-flats during the day, the Indian sportsman has better opportunities of making a bag by other methods. Possibly the short period of twilight that is enjoyed in Eastern latitudes has also something to do with it. Certainly, on the various occasions when I have waited for the evening flight, the duck have mostly come in when it was too dark to see to shoot. Advantage can be taken of the morning flight when shooting *jhils* in any of the ways enumerated above. But regular flight shooting, as is understood by the term at home, is not much in vogue in India, though if a man can conveniently visit the side of a *jhil* or other suitable spot in the evening, it is worth his



while to wait until darkness sets in on the chance that birds will be moving.

#### TANK SHOOTING.

By tanks I mean quite small pieces of artificial water such as are constructed during famine relief operations. Large open tanks are hopeless, but small tanks can be worked with satisfactory results if proper precautions are taken. The guns should cautiously approach and examine the position of the birds from behind cover, and then decide on the course of action. It will sometimes pay to fire a volley from the bank ; but more often the best and certainly the most sporting method is to send the coolies round to put up the birds, and for the guns to distribute themselves in likely positions for shots. In some districts a number of tanks exist within a short distance of each other and a full day's sport can be had with duck alone ; but more often this form of shooting is combined with other shooting, for instance, partridges, sand grouse, or buck.

Taken all in all, duck present the most difficult shots that the Indian sportsman is likely to experience. Apart from the great rapidity with which duck travel, the difficulty of judging whether the birds are within range, the difference in the speed of different species—a difference which can only be appreciated by simultaneous comparison, and the resisting power of a duck's protecting breast feathers, make the securing of a good bag of duck no easy matter.

The difficulty of judging the distances of overhead duck is a stumbling block to all beginners, and even those who ought to know better are often

guilty of firing at the most ridiculous ranges. This fault is to be deprecated for several reasons. In the first place it causes an unnecessary waste of cartridges. Secondly, it may result in wounded birds, though to a less extent than with other game. Thirdly, the extra amount of shooting entailed is liable to bruise the shoulder and bring on gun headache. Finally and chiefly, it often spoils shooting for the other guns. Time and again have I watched duck flying straight for me only to be turned aside by a shot fired wildly into the sky by an unthinking member of the party. This wild firing does not matter much on a big *jhil* where the guns are well scattered, but it is a fatal mistake on small *jhils* when shots fired by one gun are likely to deflect birds from another, and when every shot has the effect of making the birds rise higher and higher. Occasionally a stray pellet will catch a bird in the head or neck and bring it down from an amazing height, and it is no doubt exhilarating enough to pick a bird out of the firmament, but for all that it is rank bad policy systematically to fire at enormous ranges. Few men are entirely free from this fault, but there is a vast difference between falling into an occasional error in judging distance or hazarding an occasional "trust to luck" shot and making a regular practice of banging off at every duck that passes whether the distance is twenty yards or 120 yards. Some men seem really incapable of judging distance with any degree of accuracy, but the majority of hardened offenders know perfectly well what they are doing when they fire at impossible ranges, but regard the very rare success that attends the practice as sufficient

justification. It is an object lesson to watch a cool and experienced duck shot performing. He will reserve his fire for birds that pass within reasonable range, will not let his attention wander to birds that are flying far overhead at the risk of missing nearer chances, will not keep bobbing up and down out of his shelter, and at the "cease fire" will not be surrounded by six or seven times more empty cartridge cases than duck.

The next most important point to remember is not to brown birds on the wing. When you take a shot on the water or duck rise in a solid phalanx in front of you you can brown with effect. (The remarkable shot at teal which I mentioned earlier in this chapter was at a dense rising flock.) But it rarely pays to brown in any other circumstances, except, perhaps, at teal flying low and straight towards you or moving low across in close formation. Certainly browning at duck stringing overhead almost always results in failure. The reason probably is that the attention is unconsciously caught by a particular bird at which the shooter unknowingly aims point blank, with the inevitable result that this particular bird is missed and the bagging of any other is a matter of mere chance. On the other hand, if a particular bird is purposely singled out there is always the chance of one of his adjacent fellows getting part of the charge as well as the bird in question, and sometimes it is possible to kill intentionally two or more birds flying in line or close together.

When duck are flying high overhead the only shots likely to take effect are those which strike the head, neck, or wing bones, and you will often hear the

pellets rattle harmlessly upon the thick breast feathers. For this reason some advocate that such shots should be taken after the birds have passed overhead, so as to allow the shot to penetrate under the feathers. It must be remembered, however, that the head and neck of a duck offer a fair mark, and it should be the aim of the sportsman to hit his birds well forward.

A winged duck falling into deep or weedy water is a troublesome customer, and, if it happens to be one of the expert diving varieties, will probably be lost. Therefore, if a duck comes slanting down give him, if possible, a second barrel in the air or as he strikes the water. Or, if you haven't a second barrel ready, load as quickly as possible and fire as soon as he reappears, if he ever does.

#### GEESE.

There are two species of geese in India—the grey lag and the bar-headed goose. The former is much the larger bird of the two, but the general haunts and habits of the two species are very similar and there is little to choose between their merits as table birds which depend entirely upon the sort of feeding in which they have been indulging.

Geese may be shot in any of the ways enumerated above, and, except when shooting on big rivers, the bagging of geese is only incidental to a day's duck shooting. In this exception, however, the converse holds good. Large flocks of geese gather on the sandbanks of big rivers and feed in the wheat fields near the river banks, and a most enjoyable day may be spent in trying to circumvent them.

The best method is to start off in the early

morning in a large country boat, with a smaller boat in tow, and to make either up or down stream according to the known haunts of the geese. Progress up stream, unless there is a favouring wind, is likely to prove a tedious business, and this fact should be taken into consideration, or a party which has ventured too far down stream may not reach home until long after nightfall. A very pleasant day may be enjoyed in Allahabad by dropping about twenty miles down the Ganges to Sirsa, and returning in the evening by train from Meja Road station.

These river jaunts are as much in the nature of picnics as serious shooting expeditions, and the presence of ladies and a couple of packs of cards lend an additional fascination to the day's enjoyment and help to fill in the gaps between the stalks. The actual shooting is, however, exciting enough. Besides the chance of geese, duck, and pigeons, bits of snipe ground sometimes lie at a convenient distance from the river bank, and rifles should always be taken for shots at crocodiles, which are often seen basking on the sandbanks in great numbers, and at *coolan* or *coonge* (the native name for the demoiselle crane)—birds which, though not classed as game, are, nevertheless, excellent eating.

With any luck, geese will be spotted frequently. On these occasions the *modus operandi* is to embark in the small boat astern and try a stalk, or, occasionally, a drive. Sometimes, when geese are sitting near the bank, it will be possible to stalk them by land, and this gives the best chance of success. The most successful shot I ever had at geese was by this means. Three of us were exploring the Ganges above Allahabad, and had just decided to

return home when we espied a small lot of grey lags on a spit of sand about thirty yards from the bank. One of us went in the small boat and the other and myself landed. He took cover in the hope that the birds would fly near him, while I managed to creep behind some *jhow* bushes right down to the water's edge. I lay behind a bush for some time watching the birds to give the man in the boat a chance of getting within range; but they had their eyes on him all the time, and got up long before he could get near. I fired as they rose and killed two stone dead. A third dropped dead in the water 100 yards farther on, and two more came back, of which I dropped one and badly missed the other. We picked up a fifth goose in the river on our way back, so I had five, and ought to have had six, geese as the result of four barrels.

As a rule, however, geese are too wary to sit near the shore where there is cover for a stalk, and prefer open sandbanks. In these circumstances they will sometimes let a single boat get within range if the men with the guns lie down on the bottom, but the majority of such stalks are abortive, though always exciting.

Occasionally geese will be found in a favourable position for a drive, or, rather, in a position that offers the chance of a shot if the birds are put up into the air. In such cases the guns should distribute themselves widely, take cover, and get the boatmen to flush the geese. There is always a very strong element of luck in these impromptu goose drives, as it is almost impossible to tell in which direction the birds will fly. Sometimes, indeed, they will let the boatman get within easy range, or will

break back over his head in the most exasperating manner. But vagaries of this sort on the part of geese and the impossibility of foreshadowing with any degree of certainty their behaviour in different circumstances is not the least fascinating element in their pursuit, and adds to the gratification that attends the bagging of each individual goose.

Wild geese are notoriously wary birds, though single geese (which are encountered but rarely) can be extraordinarily confiding. Nevertheless, on two occasions I have walked right up to geese in the open. On the first occasion I was walking round the margin of a big *jhil*, and saw a small lot of grey lags on the mud near the shore. There was absolutely no cover, and I continued my walk without any idea of getting a shot. To my surprise, the birds showed no signs of uneasiness as I got nearer, so I inserted a couple of No. 1 cartridges on the off chance. Eventually I got within forty yards, and killed two as they sat with their necks up with the right barrel, my left having no effect.

On the second occasion, I landed with another man on a large open sandbank where a flock of bar-headed geese was sitting. The place was as bare as the palm of one's hand, and a shot seemed impossible. My companion approached them in one direction and I in another. For some reason or other—possibly because my friend's height in boots and *sola topee* is little short of seven feet—the birds kept their attention fixed on him, and allowed me to approach within range before they rose. My two barrels accounted for three geese.

Sometimes advantage can be taken of a convenient herd of cattle to get within range. I know



BAR HEADED GOOSE (*Anser indicus*)





one man who, by dint of skilful manœuvring, approached behind a buffalo to within easy range of a large lot of grey lags and bagged seven of them.

Geese are not infrequently shot on the big rivers with a rifle at long range. This method is, however, not nearly so exciting as shooting with a shot-gun, and, unless the high river bank serves as a buttress, is dangerous.

Everyone who has shot or attempted to shoot geese on the big Indian rivers has had occasion to curse that most troublesome bird, the brahminy duck or ruddy sheld duck. These duck, which usually consort in pairs, are found in great numbers on all the big rivers, and act as sentinels to the geese. Wary as is the wild goose, the brahminy duck is even warier, and many a promising stalk is spoiled by a pair of brahminies rising, with their mournful cry, at an inopportune moment.

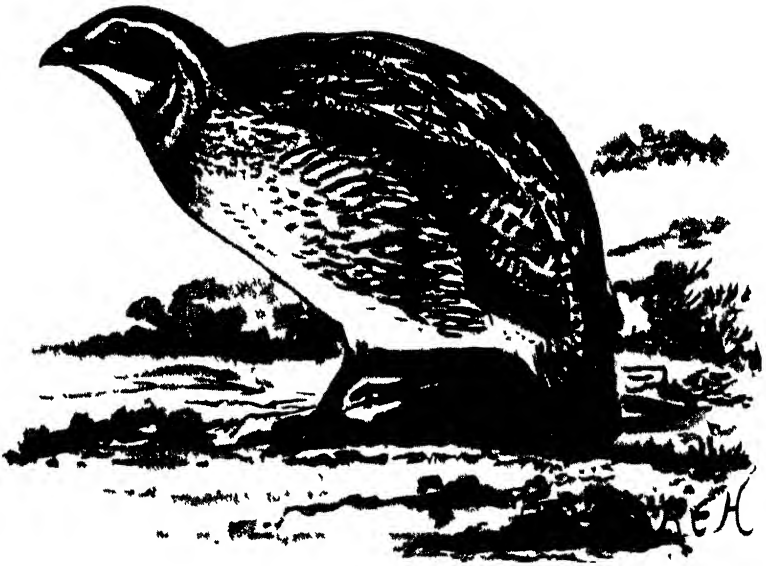
The goose is a most deceptive flier, as the laboured beats of his wings carry him along at a much higher rate of speed than they appear to do. This fact was first brought home to me on an occasion when I killed the third bird of a string of geese flying over my head as the result of a shot at the first bird. The pace at which geese travel can be appreciated if a flock of geese and duck are approaching at the same time, when it will be seen that the geese, though apparently flying at a much more leisurely rate, are in reality outpacing the duck.

Number 1 is the shot for geese, though at moderate ranges, and directed well forward, smaller shot is effective. For instance, I know of an authentic instance of two geese being bagged right and left

with Number 8. This was, of course, at very close range, but I will never forget a notable occasion when another man and I were successful with moderately heavy shot at quite long range. We were returning in the evening from an experimental day's mixed shooting, when we saw five bar-headed geese approaching. We had just time to jump out of the *ekka*, slip a couple of cartridges—which turned out to be Number 5's—into our guns, run towards the line of flight of the birds, and crouch down before they passed us at about forty yards. My friend got one, I got another; he killed a third with his second barrel, and I was so flabbergasted at the sight of the great birds falling to earth in such rapid succession that I omitted to fire my remaining barrel, and have never ceased to regret it. All three birds were stone dead, and this wonderful piece of luck put the crowning touch on a day that had been marked by luck from start to finish.

But one is too prone to remember such episodes as I have described above, and to let the chastening memory of other happenings—of stalks that failed, and easy chances that were missed—slide into oblivion.





GREY OR COMMON QUAIL (*Coturnix communis*)

## CHAPTER V.

### QUAIL, PARTRIDGES, SAND GROUSE, PIGEONS, PEA-FOWL, JUNGLE FOWL, AND HARES.

THOUGH snipe and duck are by general consent the most important game birds of India, there are others which run them close in every sporting essential. Indeed, some men prefer dry shooting to wet, and even the most ardent snipe and duck shot welcomes a day on dry land as a pleasant variation to his favourite sport.

The game birds mentioned below are the commonest which the sportsman will encounter in the plains of India, but the list is far from exhaustive.

#### THE GREY QUAIL.

This bird is very common in the Punjab, common in the United Provinces, and fairly common in the Central Provinces. It is comparatively rare in other parts. The grey quail is the largest of the dozen or so varieties of quail found in India, and is the same bird that is sold in the English markets, and occasionally shot in the British Isles.

There are two seasons of regular quail shooting in the Punjab—in September, when the birds are arriving, and in April, when they are leaving. The method of shooting them at these periods of their migration is as follows :—

Men are sent out overnight with *bolaras*, or call-birds in cages, which they fasten to poles erected

on the edge of some crop in a suitable place. These call-birds, which are merely tame quail, act as decoys to their wild brethren by calling at intervals throughout the night. The wild quail passing overhead drop down near the caged birds on hearing the latters' call, and birds which may have already settled in the neighbouring fields run and fly towards the sound. As soon as it is light enough to see to shoot, the guns arrive and commence operations. It is essential to be on the scene of action at an early hour for two reasons—first, because a mid-September or late April sun in Northern India is not to be reckoned with lightly; and, secondly, because the quail will not rise properly in the heat of the day. In September the shooting will mostly be in cotton crops, and in April in wheat. The former crop is the better for shooting in, as, being more open, more birds are flushed and fewer lost. Also, less damage is done to the crop itself, though, when the wheat is in full ear, as it always is at the time of the spring shooting, the harm that is likely to be done by walking through a field is infinitesimal, and more than covered by the gift of a rupee or two to the owner. The use of a long cord held by a coolie at each end and drawn lightly over the top of the crop will obviate walking through a field, but it is rarely necessary to resort to this plan. All quail are close-lying birds, and it is therefore important to form a close line. The majority of the birds will be flushed in the immediate vicinity of the spot where the call-birds were placed, and, under favourable conditions, will keep buzzing up in twos and threes at every few steps. If the birds are in any numbers, far more will rise at first than can be shot at; but they will

not fly far and will be accounted for later. Two or three hours will usually suffice to beat thoroughly all the adjacent fields. After this the sun will be unpleasantly hot, and the birds will be well scattered and disinclined to rise.

This sort of shooting is somewhat tame, as one rarely has to go further afield than within a short drive or ride of the station, and never beyond the haunts of man. It is, nevertheless, very enjoyable, and eminently suitable to the aged, obese, and infirm. It is also, without doubt, by far the easiest shooting of any. The quail rise at your feet and fly straight away at no great pace. Moreover, as they usually skim the top of the crop, which is usually about breast high, one gets an excellent natural line. The great objection to this form of shooting, from the point of view of educating the novice, is that it is liable to teach him to poke at his birds. I can well believe that a first-class shot would make wonderful shooting at quail shot with call-birds, but I doubt whether the over ninety per cent. averages of kills to cartridges that one sometimes hears about are really authentic, even allowing for occasional double shots (which, in my experience, are not nearly so often brought off at grey as at rain quail). When it is remembered how difficult it is to retrieve a wounded quail owing to the capacity of these birds for running, and their genius for concealing themselves, it will be realised what marvellously accurate shooting a percentage of nine birds out of ten represents. One of the best small game shots with whom I have ever been out told me that his average at quail was two out of three when shooting well, and few men would be dissatisfied with this percentage.



Unexciting as quail shooting may be in comparison with other forms of small-game shooting, there is one fascination attaching to the September shooting (apart from the supreme joy of handling a gun again after probably many weeks of idleness) which no one who has not spent the hot weather in the plains of the Punjab can appreciate. By the middle of September the end of the hot weather is within sight, but there is little in the day or night temperature to indicate this. The man who rises before dawn, however, to go quail shooting detects a perceptible chill in the outside air which is as welcome as it is surprising. What matter if he is bathed in perspiration half an hour after he has started shooting? He has the memory of that delicious coolness to carry home with him and the knowledge that the shooting season has really begun at last; for with any luck the quail shooting will last until the regular cold weather sport begins.

As far as my own experience goes, the autumn quail shooting in the Punjab is far better than that in the spring, while in the United Provinces—at any rate in the Allahabad district—the converse holds good. When I was in Allahabad we used to make excellent bags—twenty or thirty brace to two guns—by shooting with call-birds in the spring, but I never heard of anyone ever trying to shoot with call-birds in the autumn, though I know this is done farther north in the province. In the immediate neighbourhood of Lahore, on the other hand, it was no uncommon thing for several different parties to make bags of twenty, thirty, or even forty brace on the same morning in the autumn (though these figures are insignificant compared with the huge

bags secured in favourable seasons in the Multan, Rawalpindi and other districts of the Punjab), but I never heard of anything like such good sport being obtained in the spring. It is quite possible, however, that the sport varies in different years. As regards the size and quality of the birds, there is no comparison between the two seasons, the wheat-fed spring quail being far fatter and heavier than the newly arrived autumn birds.

In the interval between the two seasons of call-bird shooting, that is, roughly, during the whole period of cold weather shooting, the grey quail are scattered about the country and add variety to the sportsman's bag. He will find them in cotton and mustard crops when in pursuit of partridges, in the *gram* fields and grass lands bordering snipe *jhils*, and very often in the *jhils* themselves, lying cheek by jowl with the snipe. For instance, one day when shooting entirely over marshy ground for snipe we killed twenty-six quail to thirty-seven snipe. Grey quail are also very partial to *jhow*, as anyone who has shot on the "Island" at Allahabad knows.

#### THE RAIN QUAIL.

The black breasted or rain quail is appreciably smaller than the grey quail and is not such good eating, though a plump rain quail lightly boiled with a chili inside is not to be despised.

These birds make a very welcome appearance at the beginning of the monsoon and afford excellent sport for a month or more. They are found chiefly on grass land and are walked up with a close line of beaters. As far as I know they are never shot with the aid of call-birds, as they repair to the same

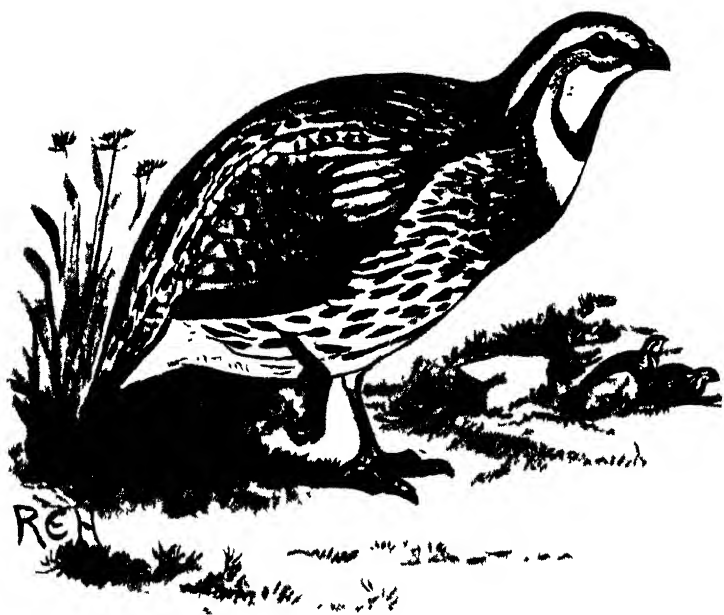
favourite haunts year after year and there is no need to assemble them by artificial means.

The best bag of rain quail that I ever helped to make was on the "Island" at Allahabad, when four of us picked up forty brace, and lost at least fifteen brace in the camel grass before lack of food and drink compelled us to stop; and the most sporting day I ever had with these birds was on the Old Race Course, at the same station, when the quail had been flooded out of the grass land and taken refuge in the tree jungle hard by, where they afforded us as great a variety of shots as woodcock would have done in like circumstances. I have also had good days shooting in the reeds and spear-grass round Ambalghuri Tank, near Nagpur, and it is possible to shoot for the whole day in the rains in the Central Provinces without discomfort, provided one is well supplied with drink.

The rain quail is only less easy to hit than the grey quail because it is smaller. Like every other variety of quail they lie close (except when they have been much harassed), fly straight and low, usually settle before going very far, and rise with a whirl.

#### THE GREY PARTRIDGE.

This is the commonest partridge in India, and frequents cultivated land (especially cotton and mustard), long grass, and scrub jungle. It is also found less frequently in tree jungle where the undergrowth is not too thick, and, like the painted and bamboo partridge, it will sometimes perch in the trees. In appearance, the grey partridge bears a strong family resemblance to its English cousin,



RAIN QUAIL (*Coturnix coromandelianus*).



and, like that bird, associates in coveys. It is a strong and low flier, and rises rapidly, getting up top speed very quickly.

A close and even line should be maintained when walking up grey partridges, and if the cover is at all dense the beaters should be encouraged to make a good deal of noise, as these birds often lie very tight, and when walking through scrub every bush should be well beaten.

Another important point to remember when shooting any partridges is to walk every bit of cover right up to the very end, as all partridges are inveterate runners, and it is often the last few yards of cover that hold most birds.

A winged partridge is always a troublesome customer, and without a dog some birds will almost certainly be lost. If a winged bird is seen running on the bare ground between the bushes in scrub jungle it should be shot at sight.

#### THE BLACK PARTRIDGE.

This is a magnificent bird, the cock, with his black, chestnut, and white plumage, being especially handsome. The black partridge frequents tree jungle with thick undergrowth and tall grass (where it is often shot from the backs of elephants), and will always be found (at any rate, in the early part of the day) in cotton and mustard crops (especially the latter) on the outskirts of suitable jungle.

The peculiarity of the black partridge's flight lies in its habit of towering before getting under way, and the novice is likely to shoot beneath his birds at first. This trick of flight once mastered, the black

partridge is not a difficult bird to hit, though in tree jungle he will give every sort of shot and tax the powers of the best performers.

#### SAND GROUSE.

Sportsmen, as a rule, roughly divide the several varieties of sand grouse that are found in India into two classes—the imperial and the small grouse. The habits of all sand grouse are much the same. They affect open country and drink morning and evening.

A few sand grouse are often picked up in the course of a day's mixed shooting by the guns stumbling upon odd flocks as they are walking across barren plains and fallow or ploughed land. Sometimes, too, a whole day may be devoted to their pursuit in a locality which they frequent, the guns wandering about until they come upon birds. But the way to make big bags is to wait at their watering-places in the morning and evening. If you are lucky enough to hit upon a tank or other piece of water which is favoured by grouse, magnificent sport of the highest order can be had. The flocks come in continuously, and, in spite of the multitude of birds, so fast and strong is their flight, and so much shot can they carry, owing to the toughness of their skins, that you will have to shoot uncommonly straight and hit your birds well forward to make a good bag.

#### PIGEONS.

The two commonest species of pigeon found in India are the blue rock and green pigeon. The haunts and habits of the two are quite dissimilar.



COMMON SAND GROUSE (*Pterocles exustus*)





The blue rock inhabits cities, villages, temples, wells, ruins, and masonry buildings of every sort. During the day they betake themselves to the fields and open plains, and rarely perch in trees. They occur chiefly in Northern India.

The green pigeon, on the other hand, lives entirely among trees, and, though it is found in considerable numbers in some parts of Northern India, is much commoner in Bengal, Assam, and other parts of the peninsula where the environment is more suitable. The green pigeon is a smaller and softer bird than the blue rock, and better eating.

Blue rocks often form part of a mixed bag, and large numbers usually pass over during an early morning grey quail shoot on their way to and from the fields, offering most sporting shots; and a supply of cartridges loaded with No. 6 shot should always be taken on these occasions, though there is often no time to change the cartridges before the birds have passed. A well-directed charge of quail shot will, however, bring them down from a considerable height.

Blue rocks take more or less the same line of flight going to and returning from their feeding, and quite a nice morning's or evening's sport can be had by waiting for the flight at "off" seasons of the year. In the hot weather they fly out very early and return before the heat of the day, and again in the afternoon they fly to the fields and return at dusk.

Gaols and other public buildings are favourite haunts of pigeons, and good sport can be enjoyed on hot weather evenings by standing in the precincts of or outside such buildings, if they are situated on the

outskirts of the station, when the birds are returning to roost.

The most sporting way to shoot blue rocks is out of wells. They are fond of inhabiting crannies and holes in the masonry sides of deep, cool wells, and a stone dropped into the depths will send them flying out like rockets.

Green pigeons are often met with in the course of a day's shooting. An incautious whistle will frequently disclose their presence in the green depths of a *pipul* or other tree, but it may take a long time to spot them, so closely does their plumage assimilate with the foliage. They can also be shot fighting morning and evening, and by lying in wait near trees laden with the berries on which they feed.

#### PEA-FOWL.

Pea-fowl are widely distributed all over India, but this does not mean that they can always be shot, as the Hindus hold these birds sacred, and the novice may find himself in trouble if he shoots them without first ascertaining the trend of local sentiment.

Pea-fowl can hardly be said to provide good sport, as they offer a huge mark, and, when rising in front of the guns, can hardly be missed. However, they form an imposing addition to the bag, and the sight of one of these enormous birds falling to earth fills the hearts of the beaters with glee.

Pea-fowl are often flushed in crops outside jungle when beating for black partridge, and in the jungle itself, but as one is usually loaded with Number 6 shot on these occasions, or at the most with Number 5 in the left barrel, long shots should never be attempted, as they can only result in wounded



GREEN PIGEON (*Crocopus chloro aster*)



birds, and a running pea-fowl in thick undergrowth will inevitably escape. A young pea-chick is, however, soft and easily bagged, and, when it appears at table, makes delicious eating. When practicable, pea-fowl should be driven. This is much the most satisfactory way of shooting them, and in suitable country they can be driven quite easily. They can also be shot with a small-bore rifle in open country.

#### JUNGLE FOWL.

Jungle fowl are very common in many parts of India, and are much in evidence during big-game beats, being, with the pea-fowl, the first of the denizens of the jungle to appear before the guns. Advantage can be taken of the presence of a large number of beaters to try a drive for jungle fowl and pea-fowl at the end of a big game shoot, and successful drives are often inaugurated, apart from such occasions, in favourable localities, when these birds afford the most sporting shots, as they fly fast and take full advantage of the cover. In some parts they are beaten up with the aid of dogs, and sometimes they will rise from the fields skirting jungle or long grass when the guns are walking through, but, for the most part, unless a systematic beat is organised, the jungle fowl prefers running to flying, and if the object is to secure meat for the pot—and most excellent meat at that—the bird must often be killed on the ground or not at all.

#### HARES.

The Indian hare is considerably smaller than the English variety. It frequents open country, cultivation, and scrub jungle, and lends variety to a day

after partridges, sand grouse, or quail. I have only once seen hares in any numbers, and that was in some broken, sandy ground covered with low bushes, near a village on the banks of an old channel of the Ravi. Every other bush held a hare, but we did not shoot them, as the headman of the village was anxious to show us a *tamasha*, which consisted of coursing them with every dog in the village. In a short time the whole place was thick with dogs, hares, men, and boys, and it would have been impossible to shoot even if we had wanted to. I only saw one hare caught, and that was devoured by the dogs before the men could get up.

When a hare gets up in front of the line, shoot at once, or your chance will probably be gone, as the sight of a hare drives the beaters temporarily insane, and they will pursue it with sticks and demoniacal yells, deaf to all objurgations.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SHOOTERS AND SHOOTING.

IT is a trite saying that, though we cannot all be good shots, we can all be good sportsmen. What constitutes a good sportsman? The question is not one to be answered lightly, but I think that a man who invariably acts in the manner that I shall attempt to describe may rightly consider himself to be one.

First and foremost the good sportsman is a real lover of shooting, independently of the size of the bag. He will always take the bad with the good. He will not grumble if the bag does not come up to expectations. He will be content to accompany you on what he knows will be a small day. He will be cheerful under adversity. He will go out on purely exploring expeditions with the full knowledge that he may never fire a shot. If he shoots badly he will not blame his cartridges, his gun, his beaters—anything but himself. He will not be a jealous shot. He will not shoot at your birds, and he will not falsely accuse you of shooting at his. If you wipe his eye he will have the grace to feign pleasure, and he will not crow when he wipes yours. If he knows the ground and you don't, he will not take the best places for himself, but will see that you get at least your fair share of shooting. At



the same time he will leave nothing to chance. He will leave no likely place untried because it entails hard walking. He will keep the beaters up to the mark, seeing that they do their work properly, and will not lose his temper with them unnecessarily. He will not lose chances from carelessness or slackness, and he will not spoil sport by loitering behind or stalking in front of the line and by talking or shouting.

He will, of course, be an eminently "safe" shot, and he will not hesitate to correct any delinquencies in this respect on your part. He will be keen on all occasions. You will never find him asleep when you drive round to his bungalow in the grey dawn, but ready waiting at his compound gate. No hour will be too early for him to start nor too late for him to get home. He will not eat an enormous lunch in the middle of the day and then indulge in a siesta while you are fretting to resume operations, but will make a sensible meal and be ready to start as soon as he has finished one smoke.

He will be prepared to rough it at all times. He will cheerfully pass half the night rolled in a rug on the platform of a wayside station, and wade waist deep into the chilly water of a *jhil* in the misty gloom of a cold weather dawn without complaint. And when he has worked his way to his stand he will not be tempted by any number of passing duck until the signal shot has been fired.

He will not leave wounded birds without a thorough search, and he will never let wounded birds be carried on the game stick. He will eschew unsporting shots that will almost certainly result in wounded birds, but he will take every reasonable chance that

offers and not wait for the "sitters." He will not fire at birds that if hit will fall into places from which it is impossible to retrieve them, nor will he try to induce a wretched coolie to risk his life by entering deep, reedy water in pursuit of a bird at which he ought never to have fired.

A keen man, a cheerful man, a careful man, a humane man—he is a good sportsman with whom it is a delight to shoot, and if you can show yourself to be such you may be certain that you will be welcome in any company.

#### GOOD AND BAD SHOTS.

A really first-class game shot is born and not made, but practice and perseverance will go a long way to make the ordinary man a respectable performer, though some men seem to be quite unable to shoot with a shot gun despite all efforts. This is comprehensible enough in the case of a man with defective eyesight, but I have known men with no physical disabilities who will fire off cartridge after cartridge at the simplest shots without touching a feather. One man in particular I know, who is keen on shooting, has a splendid eye for cricket, billiards, polo, and all games, and is a good rifle shot, and yet I am not exaggerating when I say that I have seen him fire off about a hundred shots at snipe on different occasions and only be able to claim a single bird! He tried "snapping" at his birds, and he tried "poking" at them. He had his gun altered to suit him—all to no avail. But he is one of the best of sportsmen, and that is better than being a good shot.

It is obvious that a good rifle shot is not necessarily a good gun shot, and *vice versa*. In fact, the conditions of the use of the two weapons are so dissimilar that, as a general rule, high proficiency in both is not found in the same man, though, of course, there are many notable exceptions.

There are various causes which make Indian shooting difficult. The sun is one of them. The light itself is usually good enough, though there are occasional grey days when it is hard to see low flying birds. But the sun often makes for bad shooting. Apart from the heat, which is sometimes very great (and even in the cold weather of Northern India the sun has a great deal more power than is apparent), the sun is liable to play strange tricks with the eyesight. This is particularly noticeable when snipe shooting on ground where there is a lot of surface water. In such cases the shimmer of the sunlight on the water is very baulking. There is often, too, a heat haze, both on land and water, which is exceedingly trying. Besides, you cannot always avoid getting some shots in the eye of the sun at some period of the day. Then a big *shikar* helmet is not the most comfortable head-gear to shoot in, and it often gets in the way especially for overhead shots at duck. The walking, too, is often very difficult. It is not easy to make good shooting when you are wading knee deep through treacherous snipe ground with hidden holes everywhere, or forcing your way through thick undergrowth in pursuit of black partridges. Finally, the Indian climate must be taken into account. You cannot expect to do yourself justice when you are not feeling quite up to the mark, and, though a day's shooting may

be just what you require to put yourself right again, the indisposition with which you started the day will have its effect on your shooting. Even when you start off feeling fit and well you will tire more easily than you would at home, and the end of the day will probably find you shooting less accurately than the beginning. Without doubt the insidious effect of the Indian climate has more to do with the "off" days which even the best shots occasionally experience, and is more responsible for the greater frequency of such days in India than at home than any other reason. As a rule the Indian shooter is not handicapped by wind or rain, but still there is usually some excuse for bad shooting with which we can soothe our spirits after a particularly disgraceful exhibition.

It is a noticeable fact that some men always seem to get more shooting than the rest of the party. Unobservant men are likely to put this down to luck. But this is wrong. You will always find that the man who consistently gets the most shooting (and by this I do not mean looses off the most cartridges) is a good *shikari* and up to all the little tips of fieldcraft which experience teaches.

He will recognise at a glance those little bits of cover in a snipe ground that are pretty certain to hold birds, and he will either walk through them himself or see that the beaters do, whereas the inexperienced and careless sportsman does not notice them and passes them by. He will make the beaters on either side of him beat every bit of cover carefully when walking up partridges, and he will be especially careful to walk through partridge cover up to the very end. He will keep well concealed when shooting

duck and will not be caught napping. He will quickly reload as soon as he has fired, for he knows that delay in doing this will lose him many chances. He will be quick on his birds, and, while the slow shot is getting his gun up to his shoulder and wondering whether a bird is within range, will have already fired. In these and other ways the good *shikari* will get more shooting than the bad one; and when the latter upbraids his bad luck he should rather blame his inattention to the elementary principles of field-craft.

The question of what is a fair percentage of kills to cartridges is often discussed. Some of the best-known shots in England have recorded that an average of 33 per cent. is good shooting. It is not easy to compare Indian shooting with shooting in the British Isles. It is undoubtedly easier to hit birds when they are rising in front of you than when they are driven towards you. The man who kills one quail out of three has done nothing to boast about, but if he can keep up this average at driven partridges he may (unless he is a really good shot) reasonably congratulate himself. At the same time the sportsman in India has difficulties to contend against, as I have pointed out, which the sportsman at home has not, and the man who has shot at snipe, quail, duck, partridges, sand grouse, and other varieties of Indian game throughout the season has no reason to be dissatisfied if he can claim to have killed one-third as many head of game as he has expended cartridges. He may, for instance, have started the season by killing 200 quail out of 300 cartridges, only to have his average sadly reduced by the duck later on.

It is usually an unprofitable business for the ordinary shot to keep his average for a day's shooting, though it may be instructive to work it out at the end of the season. He may begin a day's snipe shooting, say, by killing the first three or four birds at which he fires. "Good!" he thinks; "I will keep my average." The next bird is a sitter. He misses with both barrels. The next three shots are long ones and the resulting misses excusable. Two birds rise together. The first drops dead into a clump of high reeds. The second flies into the eye of the sun and is missed. He looks for the dead bird, but the second bird which rose prevented his marking the spot where it fell. The coolies are no good, and he tells them so in forcible language. While he is looking for the lost snipe a quail rises with a whir at his feet, and he fires hurriedly through the reeds. Another miss! Finally he gives up his search for the dead bird and his intention to keep his average simultaneously.

Most of us will feel far more satisfied with ourselves at the end of the day if we have not kept our averages, and will indulge in the pleasing illusion that we have shot much better than we really have.

I fancy that many of us indifferent shots are inclined in our inmost hearts to flatter ourselves on being better shots than we actually are. We are probably modest enough in public, and at the most will only lay claim to being moderate performers, but in our own thoughts we are prone to remember the days when we shot really well, and the great shots that we have brought off on various occasions. How pleasant is the memory of those great shots! Those two snipe which rose at extreme range as we

were floundering thigh deep in a bad patch of bog and were dropped stone dead right and left before they could cover those few yards that would have placed them beyond the danger zone. That black partridge which came swinging over the tree tops after successfully flying the gauntlet of the line, only to collapse to our second barrel as he was disappearing over the tree that stood between him and life. That single teal flying high and at top pace straight toward us. We doubt whether he is within range, but give him the choke on the chance, and the doubt is dispelled as he falls like a stone twenty yards behind us, bursting open his breast by the force of the fall. Who can blame us if we choose to let our memories linger on incidents such as these and to forget the many days when we shot worse than we had ever shot before, so long as we keep the memory to ourselves? But let us, once a year, face realities, and, when we put by our guns at the end of the season, compare our cartridge bill with the figures in our game book. The chances are that the calculation will give us pause and take some of the conceit out of us—for the time at any rate.

The novice will naturally wish to know how he can become a good or at least a moderate shot. First of all he must get a gun that suits him. It must not be too heavy for his strength and it must come up to his shoulder easily. If it is too long or too short in the stock it cannot come up easily. Then it must fit him; that is to say, when he aims at any given stationary object the sight should be dead on the object when the gun comes up to his shoulder. You may go into a gunmaker's shop and find that

the first gun you pick up fulfils all requirements. On the other hand you may find that there is no gun in the place which suits you, and that one will have to be specially made for you.

Go to a good gunmaker and leave yourself in his hands, merely stipulating the price you are prepared to pay. And remember that you can get as good a gun for all practical purposes, that is, as far as its actual killing capacity goes, for twelve or fifteen guineas as for double that amount. You may be sure that you won't be given rubbish by a gunmaker of good repute, and, without advising anyone to buy a low-priced gun if he can afford an expensive one, I venture to assert that if you can't hit birds with a plain hammer keeper's gun which fits you, you won't be a bit more successful with a highly finished, single-trigger, hammerless ejector specially built for you.

Having got your gun, use it on every possible opportunity at *game*, preferably at snipe, for the reasons I have already given. Practice may not make you perfect, but you will never be much good without practice. Do not practise at clay pigeons, except under expert tuition. No game bird in existence flies like a clay pigeon, and you will only be wasting your cartridges and ruining your shooting by practising haphazard at clay birds thrown out of a trap in front of you.

Keep both eyes open when you fire. If you start by shutting one eye and squinting along the barrels, you will develop into a slow, poking shot. The crossing shots will bother you most. Only practice and instinct (and it is in his capacity to judge instinctively the pace and distance of overhead and



crossing birds that the good shot rises above the ruck) will enable you to swing or hold forward sufficiently to deal satisfactorily with these shots.

Shoot as often as you can with good shots. Do not be disheartened because they outshine you, but try to emulate them and act upon the advice and hints that they offer. Shoot quickly but coolly, and above all do not get flustered. Then, if your gun is the right weight, fits you properly, and the pull-off is easy (a hard pull-off makes you jerk off your birds and is a fruitful source of misses), the chances are all in favour of your becoming, with perseverance, at any rate a good enough shot to make respectable bags to your own gun.

#### GUN ACCIDENTS.

The large majority of gun accidents are due to carelessness. No one should go out shooting unless he is prepared to conduct himself in a manner that will not make him a source of danger to others. I think that most people will agree that every sportsman should observe the following rules.

Always carry your gun in a safe position whether walking in line or not, and *whether it is loaded or unloaded*. The only safe positions are with the barrels pointed nearly vertically into the air over the shoulder or under the arm pointing towards the ground. We all know the man who when walking in single file persistently carries his gun sloping over his shoulder so that it points directly at the head of the man behind. If the latter is a good natured man he may merely keep dodging out of the way or content himself with the time-honoured joke: "You are shooting with Number 8 shot, aren't you?"

"How do you know?" "Because I can see down your gun barrels." But if he happens to be a peppery individual he will rate the delinquent as he deserves.

Never give a loaded gun to any native follower, other than a trusted *shikari*, to carry. The untutored native is an inquisitive individual, and will finger locks and triggers at the imminent risk of the gun discharging if it is loaded.

Never attempt to negotiate a difficult place without unloading. This is far better than merely putting up the safety bolt, which may be forced down while you are struggling through or over the obstacle.

It is a good plan always to unload when walking along not actually in pursuit of game—at any rate when you are in company—although this practice may lose you occasional chances; and, of course, loaded guns should never be placed on the ground or leaned against trees or other supports.

Try to cultivate the habit of keeping your gun at safety until you raise it to your shoulder to fire. If you get into this habit the custom of putting down the safety bolt as you fire will become mechanical, and you will waste no time and experience no difficulty. You will not run the risk of your gun discharging if you fall; and if you are guilty of the pestilential practice of fingering your triggers as you walk along you will do no harm. This last trick is little short of criminal, and the man who is guilty of it should never shoot in company until he has cured himself of it. Nothing is more trying to the nerves than the knowledge that the man next you is liable to loose off his gun at any moment, especially if he carries it in an unsafe position across his body.

If you fall in snipe ground so that the barrels of your gun touch the ground, look through them to see that they are clear of mud, or a burst gun may result.

Not only never shoot down the line, but never shoot anything like down the line, especially among trees. Shot scatters to a surprising extent, and pellets are deflected from trees at remarkable angles.

Never fire at birds flying low over a dog, or if people are in front, unless obviously out of range. Remember that a dropping pellet in the eye at 100 yards or more may be a serious matter, while even one in the naked body of a native at this range will frighten if it doesn't hurt him. Lastly, when closing the gun after having inserted the cartridges, do so by raising the breech end and not the barrels, which should be pointed towards the ground.

By observing these simple precautions you will be doing everything that lies in your power to avoid accidents to yourself and your companions.

Accidents sometimes occur which are unavoidable. For instance, a native may be in the line of fire concealed from view and get hit without the man who fired the shot being to blame. This is especially liable to occur when quail shooting in crops. A native may be squatting at work out of view and receive a dropping pellet, or rise just as a shot is fired and receive more serious injury. I have never seen or heard of serious accidents occurring in this way, but I have witnessed some narrow escapes, and I was once present at a drama which had a farcical termination. I was quail shooting in the early morning when a *ryot* working out of sight in the fields was touched by

a pellet at very long range. We were apprised of the incident by hearing the most terrifying groans, and, hastening up, came upon a native lying apparently at the last gasp. In response to our anxious inquiries he pointed to a tiny mark on his chest where the pellet had struck without penetrating the skin. A present of two rupees effected a speedy cure, and the man rose smiling and happy. The very next morning one of our party was shooting in the same neighbourhood. No shot had been fired for several minutes when suddenly the morning was made hideous by the cries of a man in mortal agony. The sound struck the participant of the previous day's incident as familiar, and sure enough the same native was found lying prostrate on the ground giving vent to pitiful groans and rolling his eyes in a horrible way. This time, however, he got something less to his liking than coin of the realm.

#### LADIES OUT SHOOTING.

The answer to the question whether ladies should accompany shooting parties depends on circumstances and on individuals.

I would unhesitatingly say that if the shoot is to be merely one day's outing, starting early in the morning and returning in the evening, the company of ladies should be discouraged, unless it is certain that the journey to and from the shooting ground will be performed in comfort (as by train, motor, or private pony trap), and also that at any time of the day it will be possible for them to retire for rest and shade without interfering with the sport of the rest of the party. As a general rule, the conditions of a single day's shoot are far too strenuous for a lady

to undergo the strain, unless she is exceptionally hardy. It is all very well if the shoot is not taken very seriously, or if one or other of the party is prepared to sacrifice sport to chivalry. Or, if the day is to be spent in a boat on the river the presence of ladies is always welcome. Or, again, they may quite easily accompany the guns on an early morning quail shoot, or even on a day's duck shoot where hard work is not entailed. But they are emphatically out of place in a snipe *jhil* or a black partridge jungle, or on a day which involves miles of hard walking over a rough and shadeless country in pursuit of a mixed bag.

But if the shoot is to be one of two or three days' duration, the company of ladies is calculated to add greatly to the enjoyment and comfort of the men, and the outing is likely to prove a pleasant and healthy change for the ladies themselves. The bungalow or camp which is the headquarters of the party is pretty sure to be near the shooting ground, and the ladies can always retire there to rest, under the escort of an orderly or trustworthy servant, as soon as they begin to feel tired. The men, for their part, will be certain of having the commissariat efficiently superintended and will have the tedious evening hours enlivened by feminine society.

But in all cases it is as well to be able to forecast accurately the behaviour in trying circumstances of the particular ladies whom it is proposed to invite. I have known ladies who expect to be helped over every little bit of rough or wet ground, with the result that the line is disorganised and delay occasioned. Others I have known who will go through or over anything, and never confess to being tired—

whose hearts are in fact too big for their bodies. The former class are hardly likely to contribute to the success of the day's sport, while the latter, from their unselfish anxiety not to spoil sport, run the risk of knocking themselves up. The type of lady whom we should all like to see accompanying the guns is the one who strikes a happy mean between these two classes, who will walk in line without chattering, without loitering behind or getting in front; who will negotiate reasonable obstacles without assistance, and who will know when she has had enough, and say so.

So far I have only considered the propriety of ladies accompanying the guns as spectators. Obviously, if they wish to take an active part in the proceedings, they must satisfy more stringent demands. Because a lady has shot before, it does not follow that she is fit to handle a gun. She may be able to hit birds, and yet be quite capable of hitting one of her companions. Of course there are very many ladies who are excellent and absolutely safe shots, but I know from experience that there are others who handle a loaded gun as though it were as harmless as a stick; and I would advise no one to agree to joining a party in which ladies are going to shoot unless he knows them to be careful and safe, or unless one of the male members of the party vouches for them.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SHIKARIS AND BEATERS.

SHIKARIS are, roughly speaking, of three kinds—good, bad, and indifferent. Unfortunately, the second class predominates, and many men set themselves up as *shikaris* who have no sort of claim to the title. This being so, it is advisable to dispense with the services of a *shikari* wherever possible and to rely upon one's own resources for finding and circumventing game. This is possible in most localities when one has knowledge of the ground and general conditions. But when one is exploiting new country or arranging a shoot in a distant place the assistance of a competent *shikari*, if not absolutely essential, will be extremely useful. For instance, such a man will be able to collect beaters and boats, ascertain the best ground (if the choice is extensive), arrange for transport, and in various other ways save one time and trouble and the risk of disappointment.

It is, however, comparatively rarely that competent *shikaris* are available on the spot. Men will often claim to be experienced *shikaris* at many places where shooting is to be obtained and will be found to have a certain rough knowledge of the haunts of game. But though such men are better than nothing and are useful as guides and beaters,

they can by no stretch of the imagination be styled *shikaris*, and the novice should beware of recompensing them as though they were. There is a vast difference between a true and a pseudo *shikari*. The latter may have accompanied dozens of shooting parties on various occasions and picked up a rudimentary knowledge of his work without being capable of rendering that assistance which one has reason to look for in a man who lays claim to the title of *shikari*.

A good *shikari* must first and foremost know where birds will be found on the day on which you want to shoot. To be able to do this he will have to be on the shooting grounds every day. It often happens that a lazy or incompetent man will take a party to a place where birds were numerous some days or even weeks ago, but which they have since deserted in favour of a more suitable spot. Of course it may happen that owing to snipe ground having dried up or for other reasons the whole locality where a party wishes to shoot is devoid of game. This is not the fault of the *shikari*, though it is to be feared that he sometimes gets the blame for the lack of game; and the novice is strongly recommended to write to a *shikari* or some knowledgeable person on the spot to inquire about the prospects of sport before undertaking a long journey to a distant place. It is a good thing to give a supply of addressed postcards to trustworthy *shikaris* at various places with instructions to send periodical messages regarding the promises of sport in their localities, and if their information is acted upon quickly the risk of disappointment will be minimised.



First, then, a good *shikari* will take you straight to the best ground. He must also know the best way of shooting it, if you don't know it yourself. This is particularly important in duck shooting. He must also be able to collect a sufficient number of beaters or boats, or both, and have them ready at the appointed time. Moreover, he must be able to command obedience from the beaters and make them do what he tells them. At the same time he must be sufficiently intelligent to carry out your orders properly. This is not always so easy as it sounds, and it will often tax a *shikari's* intelligence pretty severely to drive snipe successfully or work duck over the guns. Then, again, he must have a sufficient knowledge of field-craft, especially if he is in charge of inexperienced sportsmen. He must also be good at marking fallen birds, especially if they are duck. In most cases when duck shooting it is inadvisable to leave cover to pick up birds until the shooting is over for the time being. Consequently very accurate marking of dropped birds is necessary, and the shooter himself is usually unable to do this in the heat of shooting. Finally, a good *shikari* will be really keen on his work, and take a sportsmanlike interest in making a good bag, sparing no pains to achieve success, and anxious to go on working as long as light lasts.

However, *shikaris* who fulfil the above requirements are few and far between, and for every one that proves thoroughly competent a dozen will probably be found who are unsatisfactory in one way or another.

There are, or used to be a few years ago, really competent *shikaris* (and also some incompetent

ones) in the Gurdaspur district of the Punjab, where there is a chain of famous duck and snipe *jhils*. These men always knew the best ground, and would make satisfactory arrangements for sport if warned beforehand. They were very keen, and took as much interest in the making of the bag as the sportsman himself. They were extraordinarily good at marking dead duck, even in the thickest reeds, and at retrieving wounded duck, which is always a most difficult task. They were expert boatmen, and knew every yard of the *jhils*. And they could correctly name every species of duck that came in sight, even in the semi-darkness of early dawn, when the ordinary sportsman was unable to distinguish between a duck and a coot.

There are no doubt many other places in India where such men are available, but, as one has in most cases either to rely upon the services of incompetent men or to fend for oneself when visiting places at a distance from headquarters, it is a good plan to keep your own *shikari*. By this I do not mean that you should keep a permanent professional *shikari*. Though some men do this, it is a luxury that is only possible for a few. It is sometimes possible to get hold of a competent *shikari* who will also do bearer's or other domestic work. Such a man is undoubtedly a useful acquisition, but, naturally, it is a difficult matter to secure one, for the class of men from whom *shikaris* usually come does not adapt itself to domestic service.

Most Europeans in India, however, have a personal orderly or *chaprassi*. These men are often excellent potential *shikaris*, and, if care is taken in their selection, they can generally be trained to do all

that is required of them satisfactorily. Such a man is particularly useful to send out in search of game if you have not the time or inclination to explore for yourself, and to send in advance when you have decided to shoot in a distant place.

In the latter case he will be able to make all the necessary arrangements in the way of collecting vehicles, boats, and beaters, pitch the tents if you are to live in camp, and have everything in readiness against the arrival of the party. I have known several men of this sort who did their work excellently, and I remember one in particular who was a perfect paragon. This man was a *jemadar* in a Government office. He could be relied upon to bring in accurate *khubber* of the prospects of sport; he would make all arrangements satisfactorily when sent ahead to the scene of action; he was always as keen as possible, and ready to accompany the beaters through the worst places; and, above all, the excellence of his work was due, not to the hope of gain, but to love of sport and regard for his employers.

#### BEATERS.

Coolies—whether they act as beaters, or carriers, or both—are almost always necessary. Their number depends on the number of guns, the kind of game that is being pursued, and the nature of the ground. As I have already said, the fewer beaters out snipe shooting the better. On the other hand, unless a dog is used, it is impossible to flush partridges or quail really satisfactorily from thick cover without a close line of beaters.

As much of the success of the day's sport depends

upon the behaviour of the beaters, it is necessary to keep a watchful eye on them. Their first duty is to flush birds within range of the guns, and their second is to mark dead and wounded birds. When duck shooting, their most important duty is to retrieve birds. These things seem simple enough, until one has had actual experience of the Indian coolie.

As I have pointed out, the difficulty in flushing snipe is usually not to get the birds to rise, but to get them to rise within range. On the other hand, quail usually and partridges often prefer to sit tight to flying. It is obvious, therefore, that the methods of the beaters must vary in accordance with the description of the game that is being shot. But this is just what the ordinary beater does not understand. He is just as likely to go splashing, heavy-footed and noisy-mouthed, through snipe-ground as to walk silently through thick partridge cover without making any attempt to beat the bushes. This is one of the faults that the shooter often has to rectify in the beaters. Another very common fault is their tendency to get out of line. It is impossible to flush birds satisfactorily in front of a straggling line, and, moreover, it is most disconcerting to shoot at any birds except those that fly straight away in front when one knows that the line is anyhow. *Hookahs* should never be allowed in the line. The bubbling noise which they make when drawn is extraordinarily like the "whir" of a rising quail or partridge, and is calculated to put one off. Lack of keenness is another common fault. The men may start off walking and working energetically enough, but they will often lose interest after a time, especially if game is scarce. This is not unnatural, but as you

are paying the men to work for you properly, and your success depends to a considerable extent on the thoroughness with which they do their work, you should keep them up to the mark and see that they don't shirk. Beaters vary greatly in the interest which they take in the proceedings. Sometimes they take real pleasure in the sport, and voice their appreciation of good, and disapprobation of bad shooting in a marked manner. Sometimes they will maintain an attitude of indifference throughout the day, seeming to view the whole proceedings with a mild surprise that anyone should toil in the heat of the day for the sake of killing a few small birds. But even the most apathetic are always roused to enthusiasm by the bagging of a hare or a big bird like a peafowl, goose, or florican, and look upon the man who has been missing other game all day but manages to slay something really worth having, in their eyes, as a much finer shot than one who has been shooting brilliantly without happening to kill anything big.

It is perhaps easier to get the beaters to keep line and generally to beat properly than to mark dead and wounded birds. They are often extraordinarily stupid in performing this important part of their duties, and, in fact, often do not know whether a bird has fallen or not. It is obviously impossible for the shooter himself accurately to mark his birds when he is firing as quickly as he can reload. He must either leave this almost entirely to the beaters or forego many chances at other birds while he is doing his own marking. A beater who is really good at marking and finding dead birds is a valuable acquisition, and will save one a great deal in time

and temper, for nothing is more annoying than to have to leave dead birds except to leave wounded ones.

Finally, there is the matter of retrieving dead and wounded duck. Retrieving dead duck is easy or difficult according to the condition of the water. Retrieving wounded duck is almost always difficult, and when the water is reedy or deep it is exceedingly difficult. The novice should bear these difficulties in mind and not blame the coolies for their inability to perform wonders in the matter of retrieving duck, and, of course, he should never urge them to enter deep, reedy water in pursuit of birds.

If a man constantly shoots over the same ground he will often be able to get the same coolies time after time and train them according to his own methods. But if he has to rely upon strangers it is always safe to pick out one or two sharp-looking boys. Boys almost invariably make better beaters than men. They are always keener than men, their eyesight is sharper, and so are often their wits.

The sportsman must always be on the look-out to see that the game carriers do not put wounded birds on the stick. Natives of this class are extraordinarily callous in the matter of cruelty to birds and animals, and think nothing of leaving a wounded bird flapping on the game-stick all day. Even natives who ought to know better are not always free from this fault. I have vivid recollections of seeing a party of Bengali youths at a railway station on the Brahmaputra who had just returned from a duck shooting expedition up the line. Their bag of duck and geese was lying on the platform, and at least a score of the wretched birds were still alive,

though they must have been shot for many hours, and no doubt others which were dead when I saw them must have lingered in pain before they died. Small birds can be killed easily by wringing their necks or biting their heads. Duck and other big birds are more difficult to kill, but a smart rap or two of their heads against a stone, the side of a boat, or the heel of a boot will usually be found sufficient. Some men employ a game killer for big birds, which, by piercing their brains, kills them quickly and cleanly.

#### PAYMENT OF BEATERS AND SHIKARIS.

The question of payment is one which often requires careful consideration. Nobody wishes to underpay his beaters and *shikaris*. At the same time it is a fatal mistake to spoil the market by overpaying them. It is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rule in this matter. Rates of payment vary in different localities, and what may be a fair wage in one place may be inadequate in another. It is therefore advisable to make inquiries before shooting in a strange locality regarding the proper rate of payment, either from men who have experience of the place or from local authorities. The behaviour of the men themselves may fairly be taken into consideration when paying them. If they have been slack or insubordinate they deserve no more than their bare wage. If, on the other hand, they have worked well and keenly, a small amount of *backsheesh* (letting it be clearly understood why the extra pay is given) will encourage them and do no harm. It is often tempting, but not often wise, to take the extent of the bag into consideration as well. A

party which has enjoyed good sport may reward the beaters beyond their deserts without considering that they are spoiling the men and sowing trouble for less successful sportsmen. On the other hand it is obviously unfair to let one's disappointment over a bad day reflect upon the beaters' payment if they have done their best.

A skilled *shikari* must of course get more pay than an ordinary beater, though, here, again, circumstances must be taken into consideration, and the novice should guard against taking a *shikari* at his own estimation. If he does this he will very likely be paying a man who is little better and deserves no higher pay than a coolie, the wages of a competent *shikari*.

There is one point in which all beaters may be relied on to be consistent, and that is in grumbling at the pay they receive. No notice should be taken of this, however, if you have satisfied yourself beforehand as to the proper rate of payment. It is merely a "try on," which no doubt sometimes succeeds, and the novice will soon get to await their expressions of discontent as a matter of course.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE USE OF DOGS FOR SHOOTING IN INDIA.

THE use of dogs as an adjunct to shooting in India is not nearly as common as it should be, or as it would be if the advantages that accompany their use were more generally realised. It is the rarest thing in most parts of India to see a dog taken out shooting, and there are doubtless many men who have shot for years in India without ever seeing a dog at work in that country.

There are several reasons to account for this neglect. In the first place, there are few parts of India where the use of dogs is absolutely necessary. Almost everywhere in the plains game can be found and flushed by human agency, and in a country where beaters can be obtained easily and cheaply, nine men out of ten do not look further than to the native coolie for finding, flushing, and retrieving their game.

Secondly, there is a mistaken notion that sporting dogs are hard to procure in India. Thirdly, men know that properly trained dogs are not as a rule in the Indian market, and imagine that they have either not the time or the capacity to train one for themselves. Lastly, there seems to be a general impression that a spaniel or other rough-coated dog is unable to stand the wear and tear of a season's shooting in the plains.

If these objections are examined in detail, it will, I think, be admitted that they have little foundation.

#### NECESSITY FOR DOGS.

It is true that dogs are rarely indispensable to the success of a day's sport in India, but at the same time it can confidently be asserted that their use will always add greatly to the pleasure and usually to the success of most days. This will be understood more readily if the different forms of Indian shooting are considered.

For *snipe shooting* a dog is useful more for finding dead and wounded birds than for finding and flushing unhurt birds. As I have already said, snipe rarely require much flushing, and if the dog is at all inclined to be wild he should be kept on the leash until his excitement has sufficiently evaporated. This will not take long in the case of a well-trained animal, and then he can be slipped and allowed to work in front of the line, when it will be strange if he doesn't flush several birds in the course of the day which would otherwise have been passed over. For even on their wild days there are usually some close lying snipe, and when there are jack snipe about it is pretty certain that a considerable proportion will be passed without a dog.

There are also certain tracts, though few and far between, no doubt, where dogs are absolutely indispensable for finding and flushing snipe. One such tract is the neighbourhood of Shillong, in the Khasia Hills. When I first went to Shillong I was minus a dog and used to pay almost daily visits to likely-looking patches of snipe ground near the station.

In spite of the fact that borings were fairly plentiful, these visits were almost always fruitless, and eventually I gave up the hopeless quest in puzzled disgust. Then, during the summer, I bought a spaniel puppy, and though she was still very young and raw when the shooting season commenced, I managed to kill a few snipe in places where previously I had been unable to flush any. The next season showed improved results; and during our third season, when the dog was at her best and never missed a snipe (and, incidentally, when I had discovered or had been shown all the snipe ground in the neighbourhood) I never had a blank morning or afternoon, let alone a blank day, although birds were always sufficiently scarce to preclude the possibility of a good bag. The way these snipe used to lie was a revelation to anyone who had had experience of snipe in other parts of India. I have seen my dog quartering over a piece of ground a yard or two in front of the guns, evidently on a hot scent, and then flush a small bird, to the amusement of my companions, who thought she was playing the fool. But their scoffing was soon turned to admiration and surprise when the dog persisted in her search, and eventually flushed a snipe at our very feet. And this sort of thing happened not once or twice, but continually. Time after time the dog would feather, come to a half point, and then pounce, and up would spring a snipe so close to me that it might almost have been caught in a butterfly-net. I never got used to the eccentric behaviour of these snipe, and whenever the dog behaved in the way I have just described, I always expected to see one of the little button quail, which were fairly plentiful in the neighbourhood, get

up. On one occasion I put the dog into a small patch of snipe ground about ten yards square, where a Khasi girl was washing her feet in a spring. The dog at once began to feather, but she was so long in flushing a bird that I thought any snipe that might have been there must have been frightened away by the girl. I was just going to call the dog away, when up sprang a snipe. It fell, to my shot on the dry. The dog picked it up, brought it to me, and at once raced back to the marshy ground. Sure enough, another snipe was flushed, and when the dog had retrieved it, she made no attempt to return to the ground, as she knew perfectly well that nothing was left. These instances, which could be multiplied, are sufficient to show how indispensable is a dog in the Khasia Hills, at any rate, in the immediate vicinity of Shillong. I should never have dreamed of going out without my dog, as I knew that such a proceeding would have been useless except in exceptional places, such as on the sparse cover of the cut paddy fields on the uplands, where, especially late in the season when the strong nor'-westers were blowing, the snipe could give points in the matter of wildness to any that I have ever seen.

It is, however, chiefly for finding and retrieving dead and wounded birds that a dog is most generally useful for snipe shooting. As I have said, the average coolie is at the best but an indifferent marker of dropped birds, and the man who relies entirely upon himself and his beaters is sure to lose many birds in the course of a season. A good dog will save him much of this annoyance, and will be particularly useful in retrieving birds across the deep and broad channels which often intersect snipe *jhils*,

and from soft, boggy places where a man could only venture at the risk of a severe ducking.

I remember visiting a certain *jhil* in the Punjab, after an absence of two or three years. The *shikari* who accompanied me looked askance at my brown spaniel, and begged me to leave her behind. When I had shot there before I had not had a dog, and the man had never seen one used. It was the beginning of the season, and the dog was wild at first, running in and flushing birds out of range. The *shikari* was disgusted, and expressed his feelings freely. The dog was a "*badmash*," he said, and would ruin all chance of sport. I was content to let the dog justify herself by results. I put her on the leash, and let the man lead her until her first enthusiasm had worn off. Before long the dog's chance came. A snipe fell among some thick grass tussocks, and I held the dog while the man looked for it. To my delight he was unable to find it. I called him back, and sent the dog to look for it. She found it immediately, and brought it back. The *shikari* was impressed, and I rubbed the lesson in. After that I let the dog run loose, and she performed so well, both in the matter of flushing birds within range and finding and retrieving them when shot, that by the end of the day the *shikari* was completely won over, and heaped praises upon her head. His last words to me were: "Come again soon, and bring the dog."

For *quail shooting* a dog will be found of the greatest use, both for flushing and retrieving birds. I have seen a cotton field apparently beaten dry when shooting grey quail with call-birds, and then a good, bustling dog put through and flush at least a

dozen birds that had refused to rise for the beaters. Similarly, when shooting rain or any other variety of quail in grass, the beaters are bound to pass over a good proportion of birds which a dog would flush. Then, again, everyone knows how hard it is to retrieve a winged quail with the aid of beaters only. A good dog will greatly reduce the proportion of lost quail, though when the ground is hard and dry, and scent consequently bad, even the best dog may be forgiven for failing to retrieve every runner.

For *partridge shooting*, except, perhaps, in thorny scrub jungle, a dog is extremely useful. Whenever I have used a dog for partridge shooting in thick cover or crops, I have invariably got more shooting than the other guns, owing to the dog working in front of me and flushing birds which would have escaped the beaters. And there would always be constant calls from one or other of the guns for the dog to find a dead or wounded bird. I used to shoot fairly constantly in a well-known black partridge jungle in the Punjab where the ground was so extensive and the undergrowth so thick that it was generally considered hopeless for less than three or four guns and a large number of beaters to attempt to shoot it. But with a dog and only a couple of beaters I have had as much shooting by myself in this jungle as I wanted and only failed to make really good bags owing to bad shooting. In my opinion a good bustling dog is worth half-a-dozen beaters for any sort of shooting in thick cover, not only because the dog will flush as many or more birds, but also because he will, if under proper control, flush them within range and will let you know when he is "on" a bird.

In the neighbourhood of Shillong and in other parts of the Khasia Hills, woodcock take up their abode in favoured *nullahs* in the winter time. The borings in the *ponk* at the bottom of these *nullahs* will tell you pretty clearly if a 'cock is likely to be there, but the sides are so thickly covered with undergrowth and the likely bits of cover so numerous that half a dozen men might beat through it time after time without flushing the bird, and, even if they did, you would probably never see it through the pine trees. But take a good dog with you and you will almost certainly get a chance at the 'cock. You must not let him range too far ahead, and you will soon know by the movement of his tail when he is near his bird. All you have to do is to follow him closely and keep your ears more open, if possible, than your eyes, for more often than not the "whir" of the rising 'cock will be the first intimation that he is on the wing. Then, if you are alone (as is the best course, for you will not have the mortification of seeing the bird fly straight at the head of another member of the party before he flicks behind a tree and vanishes), you can shoot at sight in any direction. In all probability you will not know whether you have got the bird or not, and here, again, if you had no dog you might easily leave a dead bird behind after a half-hearted search. But there is no chance of this with a reliable dog. If you dropped the bird he will soon bring it to you: if he doesn't bring it you may be sure you missed it and must follow its probable line of flight. As with woodcock so with all jungle-haunting birds. A good dog is worth many beaters and will incidentally save your pocket.

For *duck shooting* dogs are generally out of place except for retrieving birds from deep, clear water, and if I were going out on a duck-shooting expedition pure and simple I should leave my dog at home.

Dogs are also likely to do more harm than good when scouring the open places for *sand grouse*, but these latter are the only descriptions of Indian shooting with which I am acquainted when dogs do not tend greatly to the success of a day's shooting.

#### THE RIGHT SORT OF DOGS AND HOW TO PROCURE THEM.

The difficulty of obtaining a suitable dog is far more imaginary than real. There is no question as to what is the best breed of dog to use for Indian shooting. That breed is the spaniel. A spaniel is the ideal dog for the sort of work that will be required. He will bustle through the thickest covert, is gifted with a keen nose, will find and retrieve, and can if necessary easily be trained to point, is at home in the water and marshy ground, and, above all, is always keen and willing to work.

There should be no difficulty in getting a suitable spaniel in any part of India. They are common in most big stations, but if one cannot be had locally an advertisement in one of the papers will bring many replies.

A certain amount of care must be taken in the selection of a dog. The last thing one need think about is the pedigree. A bench dog rarely makes a satisfactory field dog. For one thing, the points that go to make a good bench dog are against him when



called upon to do strenuous work out shooting. For another, a pedigree dog rarely has the requisite stamina for hard field work. The dog to choose should be a country bred puppy of country bred parents. Imported spaniels rarely do well in India, and their progeny are not likely to be able to stand the strain of field work. But if a strong looking pup is picked out of a litter belonging to strong country bred parents it will generally be found that he is capable of undergoing any amount of hard work. To show what a dog of this sort can do I may instance the case of the spaniel I had in Shillong. I took this dog with me one day to Cherrapunji, which is thirty-three miles by road from Shillong. We rode the first half of the journey, and the dog ran, as most dogs do run, covering a great deal more ground than we did. She not only ran backwards and forwards on the road, but, whenever we came to any snipe ground, she would quarter it, and sometimes this necessitated going far down the hillside by the side of the road. We stopped for breakfast at the half-way bungalow, and then drove with the dog in the trap. But nothing would induce her to stay there. She insisted on running the rest of the journey, and arrived at Cherrapunji so fresh that we took her out snipe-shooting after tea. Although she must have covered fifty miles during the course of that day, she showed no signs of exhaustion, either then or subsequently, and two days afterwards ran back to Shillong as easily as before. Now, this was, of course, in the hills, and in a cool climate, but still it shows what a strong, country-bred dog can do.

The next point to go for is size. Cockers are too

small, and Clumbers too big and heavy, besides being certain to run to fat, when they will be useless. Something between the two is the proper size. As I have said, breed is of no consequence, and, as long as your dog works well, it does not matter a scrap whether he is of pure spaniel descent or not; in fact, the admixture of a smooth-coated strain is rather an advantage. You do not want a dog too short in the leg, or he will tire too easily; neither do you want one too curly coated or too long in the ear, or he will feel the heat, and the burs and thorns will give him trouble. The two spaniels which I have had were both leggy, smooth-coated, brown dogs, with no pretensions to breed, picked out of their respective litters soon after birth, and chosen partly on account of their sex (for I think bitches are more amenable and easier to train than dogs) and partly on account of the smoothness of their coats and general fitness. They were both obviously spaniels, though I have no doubt that other strains figured in their pedigrees at no distant date, and I used to call them brown field spaniels for want of a better name. Any dog-fancier would have laughed them to scorn, but their noses were wonderful, their keenness and energy never flagged, and I would not have changed either of them for the best bench dog in India.

If possible, the parents of your dog should be good sporting dogs, or, at least, be possessed of good sporting instinct. I say "if possible," because, in a country where sporting dogs are so little used, it is not easy to get a dog of good sporting parentage. But it is rarely that a spaniel has not got sporting instinct. The parents of one of my two spaniels were excellent sporting dogs, and the

sporting instinct was so alive in the pup that I had little difficulty in training her, despite the fact that her training was undertaken in a place where game was very scarce, which is naturally a great disadvantage. The parents of my other dog were not gun dogs at all, but the sporting instinct was dormant in the pup and only needed developing. Curiously enough, she showed great promise when she was only four or five months old after rain quail, but when the regular shooting season began she seemed to have lost all interest in sport. For some time I was in despair of ever making her into a gun dog, but by dint of bringing home dead birds, which I used to hide in the compound, and praising and rewarding her when she found and retrieved them, I gradually awoke her latent instinct, so that before long the trouble was to restrain her eagerness.

The sporting instinct is probably more highly developed in spaniels than in any other breed of dog, but it sometimes crops up in unexpected places. Terriers, for instance, often make quite useful gun dogs, and I have known two terriers used in India with a certain measure of success. Even terriers who have never been taken out shooting sometimes show extraordinary excitement at the sight of a gun. A dog of this description executed one of the cleverest ruses that I have ever heard of. Whenever he saw a gun he would go half mad with excitement, but, as he was useless in the field, he was never allowed to accompany his master.

One day his master (this happened in England) took out his gun to shoot in a field near the house, and asked his wife to keep the dog shut up. The dog had seen the gun and went on in his usual way,

so his mistress took him to an upstairs room, where she tried to calm him. When the dog found that she refused to open the door he quieted down, but soon began to make the unmistakable noises which a dog makes preliminary to being sick. His mistress looked at him with suspicion, but as the noises grew more insistent she dared not risk waiting any longer, and opened the door, when the dog was down the stairs, out of the house, and making a bee-line to the field in a flash.

#### THE TRAINING OF DOGS.

It is a fact that properly trained dogs are not, as a rule, in the Indian market. There are no professional dog-breakers in India, and a man who has trained his own dogs for himself naturally does not wish to part with them unless he is leaving the country. Neither does it pay to import trained dogs from Europe, for the reasons I have already given. One must almost invariably, therefore, train one's own dogs.

Now to train a dog to perfection is an art which requires patience, sympathy, and instinct, besides good material to work upon. Personally I have never had or seen a perfectly broken dog; but my dogs have been good enough for me, despite their manifest shortcomings. Anyone who exercises a reasonable amount of patience can train a dog sufficiently well to get a great deal of pleasure and profit out of his use, and it is naturally far more gratifying to know that you have "made" your dog yourself than to buy one already trained.

The training itself, far from being irksome, will be found a most interesting occupation, and

need only take up a few minutes of one's time daily.

There are several excellent books on the training of dogs, and anyone who wishes to train a dog thoroughly will do well to follow out carefully the instructions contained in any one of them. I do not propose to give any detailed instructions on this subject, as most of my limited knowledge has been derived from books, but the following tips may prove useful.

It may be taken for granted that wherever you are, or whatever sort of shooting you are likely to get, you will want your dog to hunt, find dead and wounded birds, retrieve, and drop to shot—or, at least, not run in as soon as you have fired. You may also possibly wish your dog to point.

#### HUNTING.

This is the only part of a dog's education that cannot be initiated in your own bungalow or compound. Few puppies will begin to work at once when they are taken among game, but if a pup has any sporting instinct it will soon assert itself, and he will before long begin to show an interest in the scents around him. In early days the pup should be taken to a place where game is fairly plentiful. If game is scarce he will not understand what he is required to do and will amble along aimlessly. If game is very plentiful he is apt to get confused and wild. The cover should not be too thick or he will refuse to face it, and if the ground is too soft and wet he will be more concerned in picking a way for himself than in looking for game. The best sort of ground is short grass frequented by quail, for the

pup will be able to work easily and will be in full view the whole time, while quail are undoubtedly the best sort of game on which to train a young dog.

The first thing is to encourage the pup to work, the second is to teach him to work so close in that he will not flush birds out of range. You will find the check-cord of great assistance in teaching him the latter important duty. You should also teach him to hunt in any direction by obeying a wave of your arm, and to come to you at a given signal. A well-trained dog should, in fact, never require to be called or even whistled; but there is no need to be disgusted with yourself or your dog if you cannot bring him to this pitch of perfection.

#### FINDING AND RETRIEVING.

These are two distinct accomplishments, though the latter is complementary to the former. It is very easy to teach a puppy both to seek dead and to retrieve, and I think it best to teach him both at the same time, and then, when he is sufficiently proficient, to combine the two, so that when he is taken into the field he will know that he has to retrieve what he finds. You begin to teach him to seek dead by hiding bits of food about the room or in the compound, and urging him to find them by saying "Seek dead," or anything you like, so long as you stick to the same expression. You must at first accompany him in the search, and practically show him where the morsel is hidden, but he will soon learn to use his nose on his own account and to obey the directions of your waved arm or even pointed finger. At the same time, teach him to retrieve by throwing an old glove, sock, or tobacco

pouch a yard or two away, and rewarding and praising him *when he delivers it into your hand*. This latter point is most essential. Gradually increase the distance, and then combine finding and retrieving by substituting for the piece of food which you hide the article with which you are teaching the pup to retrieve, and make him bring it to you when he has found it. The last stage is to make him find and retrieve a dead quail or snipe which you have brought home.

If these home lessons are well taught you will have no trouble in the field. For the first few times that you take the dog out shooting it is advisable to put some pieces of biscuit in your pocket with which to reward him, but you can soon discontinue this practice, as the pleasure which the dog takes in his work will be sufficient reward. But in all the initial stages of training, rewarding and praising—especially the latter—are necessary to insure success. Indeed, you should never give up praising good work. Dogs are very human in this respect, and in many others too. *Per contra*, you should never fail to scold, or, if necessary, correct more harshly bad work. But you must ever study the temperament of your dog. Some will take kindly to a sound thrashing and work all the better for it, others will be cowed or turn sulky (I knew one who would go straight home if he was hit, and as soon as this peculiarity was known he was usually hit on the first opportunity); while all will know whether the beating is deserved or not. As a rule, scolding is far better than beating, and if a man is constantly beating his dog in the field you may be pretty sure that his early lessons were badly taught.

As it is in finding dead and wounded birds that a dog is of most use in India, this part of his education should be conducted with particular care. A winged quail or partridge in thick cover is rarely recovered without a dog, and, if there is anything of a scent, rarely lost with a good one. Both my spaniels were wonderfully good at finding dead and wounded birds, especially the first one I had. I had only to put her on the scent of a running partridge and then sit down with the practical certainty that she would bring me the bird sooner or later. It should be borne in mind that when a dog is looking for a dropped bird no one should walk about near the place where it has fallen for fear of confusing the scent.

It is easy to teach a dog to retrieve, but not so easy to teach him to do so tenderly. Scolding will sometimes be sufficient to break a dog of the habit of biting and mauling. Some advocate running knitting-needles through the object to be retrieved so as to make the dog retrieve tenderly, or teaching him to retrieve a bunch of keys (I have found this answer) or a sour apple. An elastic band over the jaw is also said to be an efficient remedy. Of course, many dogs are naturally tender-mouthed and require no training in this particular respect. If a dog is hopelessly heavy-mouthed and cannot be broken of mauling his birds, he must not be allowed to pick them up.

#### DROPPING.

This is the hardest part of a dog's education and few men succeed in properly teaching their dogs to drop to shot, and to remain down until they are given the signal to go on. Spaniels always instinctively



rush in as soon as a shot is fired unless they have been trained not to do so. This habit of running in is most objectionable, and nothing is more trying to the temper than seeing a dog chase a low-flying bird or quest madly about in search of a bird that has not fallen, deaf to all whistles and objurgations. It is therefore very necessary to train your dog, if not to drop to shot, at least to refrain from running in as soon as you fire, and this lesson is best taught before the dog is shown game, though some men prefer to teach it in the field with the aid of the check-cord.

#### POINTING.

The elementary part of pointing is easily taught with the aid of a check-cord before a dog is shown game, and most dogs can be taught to point game if a reasonable amount of care is taken during the first lessons in the field. But if a dog is going to be used for all sorts of shooting it is doubtful whether the art of pointing should be taught at all. It is a useful accomplishment in low cover when the dog can be easily seen, but is obviously out of place in thick cover, where the dog is often not in view and bustling tactics are required to get the birds to rise. The ideal dog would point snipe and quail in open ground and flush partridges, &c., in thick cover, but it is too much to expect an ordinary man to train an ordinary dog to such a pitch of perfection. Many spaniels will, however, semi-point, and all will give indication of the close proximity of game, so that they can be encouraged to "dwell" for a few moments before flushing their birds.

Besides the above accomplishments, a pup should be under complete discipline and used to the sound of a gun before being taken into the field. He must have learned implicit obedience, and to come to and follow at heel at a motion of the hand. No dog should be affected with gun-shyness if he is taken in hand soon enough. Small charges of powder, gradually increased, fired off at first at a distance and then near him, will accustom him to the sound of a gun. If he shows nervousness he should be petted, and, if this is not sufficient, the sound of the gun should be associated with food.

For instance, if his meal-times are heralded by a gun-shot he will soon learn to welcome the sound.

It is most important that a dog should have learned all his elementary lessons before he is taken out shooting. It is far more difficult to train an absolutely raw dog in the field than one who has been grounded at home in the principles which he will be required to put into practice. The earlier a dog is taught these first home-lessons the better. A puppy of three or four months is quite old enough to start training. The lessons should be short (just a few minutes each day), so that the pup will not get bored. A pup of six months old, or even younger, can be taken out shooting, but, naturally, he must not be allowed to do much at this tender age.

When you first take your pup into the field, you should devote all your attention to him, and subordinate the actual sport to his training. For instance, shots should be picked, as it is important to kill your birds dead. Missing birds is a bad preliminary to a

dog's training, and wounding them is little better, as puppies are liable to be frightened by a flapping bird, or, if they can be induced to pick them up, are tempted to kill them. The best plan is to devote yourself entirely to the pup, and let another man—a good shot, for preference—do the actual shooting. You can then keep the pup on the check-cord yourself, and train him in the various departments as you go along. You will find this by far the best method for teaching him not to run in as soon as a shot is fired, if you have not already taught him this lesson before he has been shown game.

An ordinarily intelligent pup will learn his home lessons very quickly, and, if his early lessons in the field are carefully conducted and he is not kept out too long at first, he will soon become an acquisition to any shooting party.

#### THE ABILITY OF A SPANIEL TO STAND HEAT.

Many men think that a spaniel, being a rough-coated dog, is liable to be knocked up by the heat of the plains. But spaniels vary greatly in the thickness of their coats, and a man who wanted to use one in a hot climate would naturally choose one with a smooth coat in preference to a curly coated dog. Besides, a spaniel can always be shaved if it is found that he is feeling the heat, or sent up to the hills in the close season. The climate of Northern India in the cold weather suits spaniels admirably, and a strong dog is able to work all day anywhere in the Punjab or United Provinces for two days a week throughout the regular shooting season without any ill effects.

I kept a spaniel in Allahabad all through one hot weather, and used to take her out after rain-quail in July and August. The next year she was sent up to the hills in the hot weather, but got ill, and was brought back to the plains. The following year I had her with me in Lahore for the greater part of the hot weather, and shot quail with her as late as the beginning of May and as early as the beginning of September—both hot enough months of different kinds of heat—and she thrived. I may say that I sent her to the hills in the middle of May, and brought her back at the beginning of August, when I took the precaution of shaving her coat.

#### THE CARE OF DOGS.

A dog-lover need not be told to make a companion of his dog and to look after his health on all occasions. If a dog is always with his master, he is far more likely to understand his wishes and obey him implicitly than if he is relegated to the sweeper and only taken out by his master when he goes shooting. A dog's well-being should always be studied when he is working. He should be given a good feed before he is taken out, and something again during the mid-day halt. Hot Bovril is an excellent thing. He should be rubbed dry when you sit down to lunch, and again at the end of the day. If the weather is cold, it is usually advisable to put a coat on him both in the early morning and evening if you are driving through the open air. If he shows the slightest sign of exhaustion, he should not be allowed to go on working, and, when you are shooting dry country, a supply of water should

always be taken for him. A dog will, as a rule, get less exhausted in a snipe *jhil* than in dry country, and, when shooting the latter, an occasional few minutes' halt should be taken to rest him. When you have been shooting through thick covert, the dog's coat and ears should be freed from burs and thorns before he goes to bed, and his feet should always be examined at the end of the day for thorns and cuts.

As regards food, it is unwise to lay down any hard and fast rule. Some dogs thrive on the food supplied by the sweeper, which usually consists of soup and *chupatties* (unleavened bread), and for which this domestic will probably charge two rupees a month. With others, this diet does not agree, and they should be fed on scraps from your own table with a liberal allowance of green vegetables and rice. A certain amount of meat—beef and mutton, never chicken or game—is good for sporting dogs, and they should be given chop bones whether sweeper or table fed once or twice a week. Some dogs will not look at dog biscuits, but if a dog takes kindly to them they are an excellent form of diet, either dry or soaked in water or soup. It is a mistake, however, to confine a dog to a biscuit diet entirely. If a dog is run down, nothing is a better pick-me-up than a well-boiled sheep's head after the brains and tongue have been extracted for your own consumption. In fact, it is a good plan to give a dog this dish once a week throughout the shooting season. A light feed in the morning—a little porridge or biscuits—and a square meal in the evening answers best. Feeding at odd times should not be allowed, and if a dog is inclined to scavenge (most spaniels have a natural bent in

this direction, and often the better bred the dog the more pronounced is this tendency) he should not be allowed to run loose in the compound. A basin of tea well diluted with warm water and milk is not a bad thing at the end of a tiring day.

The above remarks apply to grown dogs. Puppies require to be fed three times a day, chiefly on a milk diet, such as plain milk and water, bread and milk and water, porridge and milk, plain milk puddings, or puppy biscuits soaked in milk and water. They can be gradually introduced to soup and vegetables, but milk should be their staple form of diet for the first four or five months. One successful breeder of sporting spaniels and knowledgeable man on dogs brings up his puppies on Frame Food—an excellent but rather expensive diet.

Some sweepers are wonderfully good with dogs, and feed and look after them with commendable care. If you can trust your sweeper—and your dog's appearance and general health will be a sure guide to this—well and good. Let him tend the dog by all means. It is just as well, however, always to make a rule that he brings the dog's food for your inspection and feeds him in front of you. If you have reason to believe that the sweeper neglects the dog, don't let him have anything to do with it beyond washing and brushing it under your supervision. In any case do not let your dog become a "sweeper's dog," by which is meant a dog who prefers the sweeper to his master.

Some men let their dogs sleep with the sweeper, some in their own bungalows, and others provide kennels in the compound or boxes in the verandah.

One or other of the two latter courses is probably the best, provided that rabies—the greatest curse to Indian dog life—is not prevalent among the jackals and pariah dogs that infest most Indian compounds. At the first hint of rabies appearing in the station your dogs should be chained up in a safe place, and only allowed to exercise under your own eye or in the company of a trustworthy sweeper.

All dogs in India are very subject to bowel complaints, for which the best cure is castor oil—administered by the sweeper in your own presence. There is a veterinary surgeon in most stations, however small, but they are not always competent to deal with canine ailments, so it is advisable to invest in a book treating of dog management in India. In Lahore there is an excellent dog hospital where sick dogs are treated with skill and care, and there may be similar institutions in other parts of India.

#### THE PLEASURE OF USING DOGS.

Apart from the advantage that is gained in the matter of bigger bags from the use of dogs, there is an immense amount of pleasure to be derived from watching them work. The presence of a good dog will go far to compensate one for an indifferent day's sport, and his keenness and optimism will be infectious, even in the most adverse circumstances.

The keenness of sporting dogs is, indeed, most exhilarating. They will show excitement as soon as the gun-case is produced, and, unless they are tired, their keenness will not flag all day. One of my dogs, when she saw my gun and cartridges got ready overnight for an early start next morning, would

insist upon spending the night in my room, for fear, I suppose, lest she might be left behind.

Then, again, a dog will often create diversion by eccentric acts, which almost show that they have a sense of humour. Two men I know were out snipe shooting with a spaniel one day, and one of them, who was a poor shot, had fired off a number of cartridges without result. At length, after he had palpably missed a bird, the dog ran off, and presently appeared with a snipe in his mouth. Where he had found the bird was a mystery, until one of the game carriers, who was carrying the dead birds loose in his hand, explained that the dog had snatched one out of his grasp, presumably with the idea of encouraging the unlucky sportsman.

One day I was shooting with another man when three or four snipe rose in front of us. I missed my bird badly, and my friend dropped one in a small stream. We both watched the birds which had escaped without noticing what my dog was doing. When we looked for the dead bird it was nowhere to be found, and the dog, instead of looking for it, ran off to the spot where my bird should have dropped, and, to my surprise, picked up and brought me a snipe. If it had not been for the fact that the dead bird was soaked with water I would have thought that I had killed an unseen snipe, whereas the fact was that my dog had picked up my friend's snipe when we were not looking and deposited it on the dry ground near the place where my bird had risen. The dog had never before failed to bring a bird to hand without dropping it, and it certainly looked as though she wanted to cover my bad shooting.



The pleasure of shooting with a dog is so great that few men who have had even a moderate dog will be content to be without one. For my own part I would rather shoot with a bad dog than none at all—provided, of course, that he was not bad enough to spoil sport. My advice to every embryo sportsman is to get a spaniel pup as soon as possible. As I have said, suitable dogs are easy to get and not hard to train. Even if your dog has been indifferently trained, you will probably find him of considerable assistance, while, if he is under proper control, hunts well, retrieves tenderly, and drops to shot, you will have a treasure from which no consideration would induce you to part.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SOME PRACTICAL HINTS.

#### GUNS.

A DOUBLE barrel 12-bore is the most suitable gun for the ordinary man. For a man of inferior physique, however, a 16-bore is a better weapon. The end of a long day often finds a man very tired, and it is then that the difference in weight between a 16-bore and 12 bore will be most fully appreciated. A light 12-bore is not recommended because of the tendency of such a weapon to "kick." A 16-bore requires to be held rather straighter than a 12-bore, but this is hardly a disadvantage, and, if it were, would be more than counterbalanced by its greater handiness. A 16-bore is an ideal weapon for snipe and quail shooting. A 12-bore may do more execution against duck and geese, but, still, a good performer will hold his own even here with the smaller bore.

Some men who do a lot of big game shooting use a shot and ball gun for small game shooting, so that they can use the same gun in the jungle. The drawback to using a gun of this description is its weight, and, as an ordinary shot gun is capable of shooting a bullet with deadly effect at the short ranges that jungle shooting usually offers, it is doubtful whether it is good policy for the one gun man to invest in a shot and ball gun.

One occasionally sees a man using a magazine or repeating gun. Such a gun is useful for duck

shooting, but here, again, the weight is against it, and such guns have an occasional awkward habit of jamming at critical moments. (A friend of mine had the mortification of seeing a tiger which he had wounded with one of these guns recover from a knock-down shot and escape while he was struggling with the mechanism.)

I have known a big man use a 10-bore with excellent results, and a small man kill more duck with a 20-bore than the rest of the party together using 12-bores. But this merely serves to show that every man must use the bore which suits him best—that is, with which he can kill most game, and in the majority of cases this will be a 12-bore with the right barrel cylinder and the left modified choke. When you have bought the gun that you intend to use you should stick to it and not change to others, or your shooting will probably suffer.

One objection to using a gun other than a 12-bore is that it is often difficult to borrow cartridges if you run short. On the other hand, you are not so likely to have cartridges borrowed from you.

#### AMMUNITION.

Well-loaded cartridges can be obtained in any of the big towns. Schultz is probably the best powder for Indian shooting, as it lasts well, gives but a slight recoil, kills well, and does not foul the barrels unduly. I have used cartridges loaded with Schultz that were three or four seasons old and found them kill well.

As regards shot, No. 9 is best for quail and jack snipe; No. 8 for full snipe and green pigeons; No. 6 for teal, partridges, hares, common sand

grouse, and blue rock pigeons; No. 4 for duck, jungle-fowl, pheasants, and imperial sand grouse; No. 2 for peafowl, florican, and houbara; and No. 1 for geese. If only two sizes of shot are used, 8's and 4's are the best; and, if only one size, No. 7 would probably answer best for all-round shooting. Different coloured cartridge cases should be used for the different sizes of shot.

#### CARE OF GUNS AND AMMUNITION.

It is advisable always to clean one's gun oneself. Servants are apt to treat them roughly. A pull-through should be taken in one's pocket out shooting, and the barrels cleaned at the mid-day halt and at the end of the day. At the end of the season the gun should be put away in a dry place and occasionally—more often in the rains—taken out of its case and cleaned.

Cartridges should be kept in a dry place, and the box should not rest on the floor. If cartridges get wet out shooting, they should be wiped with a handkerchief and placed in the shade to dry.

#### THINGS TO TAKE OUT SHOOTING.

When one is going out shooting for three or four days, it is advisable to make a list of the things that will be required, as the omission of one or other essential articles may mar the success of the outing. The following does not profess to be a complete list, but it includes most of the essentials that will be needed on ordinary occasions:

*Gun and Cartridges.*—(Seeing that all parts of the gun are complete, and that cleaning implements are in the case; and taking care that

a sufficient number of cartridges are taken, and that the cartridge-bag is not left behind.)

*Game-stick and Shooting-seat.*—The game-stick should be able to hold duck on one side and snipe on the other. A shooting-seat is useful for duck and snipe-shooting, as I have explained before.

*Clothes.*—Everyone must take what he thinks necessary. A sweater is always useful when the mornings and evenings are cold. Boot-trees should be taken when one is likely to get one's boots wet. Special care should be taken not to forget one's topee. One usually starts off at night wearing a cap, and many a man has arrived at his destination to find that he has forgotten this indispensable part of his outfit.

*Bedding.*—This must of course always be taken and should include a mosquito-net if mosquitoes are likely to be encountered.

*Camp Furniture.*—This is only necessary if one is going to live in tents, but a camp-bedstead is often required at a dak bungalow and is in any case always a useful possession.

*Stores.*—The following articles of food are nearly always necessary—bread, tinned butter, condensed milk, flour, sugar, tea, salt, and other condiments, jam, eggs, cheese, fresh vegetables, and fruit. A hump of beef and a ham are good stand-bys to supplement the game that is killed. Among tinned foods, sausages, bacon, biscuits, fruits, Crosse and Blackwell's soups and army rations are useful. The two latter are excellent in emergencies, as they can be heated in a few minutes and make a satisfying meal.

As regards drink the most important thing to remember is to take plenty of soda water. Even in the cold weather of Northern India, hard exercise engenders a generous thirst, and although soda water bottles are heavy articles, considerations of weight should not induce you to stint the supply. The pleasure of many a shoot has been seriously discounted by underestimating the drinking capacities of the party.

A bottle of brandy should always be taken in case it is wanted in emergencies.

Candles, oil, and hurricane lamps will usually be wanted, so will cooking utensils and crockery in most inspection bungalows. Two or three empty kerosene oil cans for carrying water should be taken, and smokes must not be forgotten.

*Medicines.*—A few simple medicines must be taken and will take up little room. The following are useful. Quinine tabloids for fever, phenacetin or asperin for headache, castor oil for dysentery, chlorodyne for internal pains, boracic ointment for *jhil* itch, zambuk for cuts, &c., eucalyptus for colds, mosquitoes, and as a disinfectant, vaseline for sunburn, and snake-bite lancet outfit (to be carried in the pocket).

*Cards and Literature* are necessary to beguile the evenings.

*Binoculars.*—A good pair of glasses is often useful for duck shooting, or when shooting in black buck or chinkara country.

*Tiffin Basket.*—Is always wanted on every shoot, and will either be carried by a coolie accom-

panying the shooting party or sent out to a given place from the camp or bungalow.

*Water Bottle.*—Though not absolutely necessary is always useful.

#### FOOD AND DRINK.

It is very important to start the day on a good meal. It is not everyone who can do justice to a substantial breakfast at four or five o'clock in the morning, but the man who fortifies himself with porridge and eggs and bacon has a great pull over the man who toys with a cup of tea and a piece of dry toast, and is far less likely to take any ill effects from exposure, wet, and tiredness. Therefore, however distasteful it may be, everyone should force himself to eat a solid meal in the early morning before starting out.

Another important thing to remember is not to get separated from the *tiffin* basket, or to go wandering off without a clear knowledge of where the lunch is to be found. Serious results are apt to follow a prolonged fast in the heat of the day. As a precaution against accidents and misunderstandings on the part of the *tiffin* coolies, it is advisable to carry a substantial piece of chocolate and a flask of brandy in one's pocket and to sling a water-bottle (containing cold tea for choice, provided the bottle is not made of aluminium) over one's back.

Experience will tell you what midday drink suits you best. Some men can drink beer and whisky pegs with impunity in the heat of the day and shoot all the better afterwards. Others get headachy and sleepy after alcohol, and shoot best on soda-water

or lemonade. If plain water is drunk it must be boiled first. Nothing is more comforting at the end of the day than tea, and if one is very tired a dollop of whisky in the tea makes a most refreshing drink. For this purpose a small spirit-stove and kettle or Thermos flask should be taken out. A good pattern of the former is the "Sirram," which contains everything that is necessary, and packs away neatly in a small box.

It is a good plan to take out a servant to look after the food arrangements, even when the shoot is only for the day.

#### CARE OF HEALTH.

A day's shooting is often what one requires to cure indisposition. But if one is really feeling ill it is a great mistake to go out, especially if one is suffering from fever and a day's snipe shooting is in prospect.

Two of the commonest ills from which sportsmen are likely to suffer are gun headache and *jhil* itch. The former often comes on when one has been firing off a lot of cartridges in rapid succession, as one does when duck are moving about freely, and going without food for too long is a predisposing cause. It is as well to knock off shooting at the first symptoms, for each shot only increases the agony, and it is impossible to do oneself anything like justice.

*Jhil* itch is another most painful complaint, though the wearing of putties ought to keep one immune. If one does have the misfortune to contract it, as much phenyl as can be borne in the bath and an application of boracic powder or ointment



will effect a cure, though not always a speedy one.

One should always wrap up well at the end of the day to avoid contracting a chill from the evening air, and, of course, wet boots and clothes should be changed before starting homewards. If one feels shivery or feverish after a day's shooting, fifteen grains of quinine should be taken at once.

#### GAME BOOK.

Everyone who is keen on shooting ought to keep a game book for his own profit and pleasure. This book may show dates, places, details of bags, names of guns, one's own individual bags, and have a column for remarks. Such a book will serve the double purpose of supplying most valuable aid in the way of fixing dates and other important details, so that you may know when to expect birds at different places, how much you paid to coolies and *gharry-wallahs* on the last occasion, &c., and of providing a record of all your shoots, both great and small, the perusal of which will recall many happy days.

## GLOSSARY

SHOWING THE HINDUSTANI NAMES OF GAME BIRDS AND WORDS  
THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE USEFUL IN THE SHOOTING FIELD.

N.B.—As this list is only intended for the guidance of newcomers in the country, who are quite ignorant of the language, I have spelt the vernacular words phonetically, without any consideration of their correct spelling. Hindustani will not, of course, take a man all over India, but most of the following words will be understood over the greater part of the Punjab and United Provinces, and in parts of Bengal, the Central Provinces, and the Plains of Assam.

Prepositions (\*) follow the nouns that they govern—*e.g.*, Give me—Hum (me) ko (to) do (give); Money for the coolies—Paisa (money) kooly logue (coolies) kiwasti (for).

u is pronounced like the u in “cup.”

ū is pronounced like the oo in “foot.”

Able, Can . . .	Sukter.	Beat (imperat.)	Māro.
Again . . .	Fare.	Behind . . .	Peachy.
All . . .	Sub.	Big . . .	Burrer.
Also . . .	Be.	Bird . . .	Chiriya.
All Right . . .	Utcha.	Black partridge	Karler Teetur.
Animal . . .	Jarnwer	Boat . . .	Kishty.
Another . . .	Doosera.	Bottle . . .	Seesy.
•		Boy . . .	C h o k r a, Lurker.
Bag . . .	Tily.	Boiling water .	Footer Parny.
Bad . . .	Krarb.	B r a h m i n y	Chuckwar.
Basket . . .	Tōkry.	Duck	
Bath . . .	Gūssul.	Bread . . .	Roty.
Bank, Margin	Kanāra.	Bring . . .	Laow.
Back . . .	Woppus, Fare.	Bullock . . .	Byle.
Baggage . . .	Sumarn, Marl.	Bridge . . .	Pool.

Cartridge . . .	Kartouche.	Game-stick . .	Chiriya ke Lukry.
Cartridge Bag	Kartouche ke Tily.	Get out of the way (imperat.)	Nickeljow.
Chicken . . .	Mootghy.	Give (imperat.)	Doe.
Clothes . . .	Kupra.	Go, Go away (imperative)	Jow.
Comb Duck . .	Nukta.	Go on (impe- rative)	Chello.
Charcoal . . .	Charwul.	Gone off . . .	Chellageer.
Cold . . .	Tunda.	Good . . . .	Utcha.
Come (impe- rative)	Ow.	Grass . . . .	Garse.
Crops, Field of	Kate.	Gun . . . .	Bundook.
		Goose . . . .	Rajharns.
		Green Pigeon	Hurrier.
Dead . . . .	Murgeer.	Hare . . . .	Kargōsh.
Dog . . . .	Kūta.	Here . . . .	Idder.
Drinking Water	P e e n y k e Parny.	Hill . . . .	Pahar.
Drive (imperat.)	Honko.	Hit . . . .	Lugger.
Dry . . . .	Sūkker.	Horse . . . .	Gora.
Duck . . . .	Buttuk, Harns.	Hot . . . .	Gurru.
		How? . . . .	Kisa.
Egg . . . .	Under.	How many? .	Kitna.
Enough . . . .	Bus.	How often? .	Kitna Duffer.
Escaped . . . .	Butchgeer.	How far? . .	Kitna Door.
Everything . .	Subcheese.	Immediately .	Ek Dum, Jut Put.
		Jackal . . . .	Geedar.
Far . . . .	Door.	Jungle Fowl .	Jungly Moor- ghy, B u n Moorghy.
Fallen . . . .	Girgeer.		
Feather . . . .	Pūrr.	Kill (imperat.)	Mardarlo.
Fever . . . .	Bokhar.	Kind, Sort . .	Kism.
Few . . . .	Tora, Kumty.	Keep Line (imperative)	Line Barndo, Barabaro.
Finished . . . .	Hōgeer.	Kite . . . .	Cheel.
First . . . .	Pily.		
Food . . . .	Karna.	Lazy . . . .	Soost.
Forward . . . .	Argy.	Lamp . . . .	Butty.
Found . . . .	Miller, Mil- geer.		
Fire . . . .	Arg.		
Flown away . .	Ūrgeer.		
Flour . . . .	Mida.		
For (prep.) *	Kiwasty.		
From *	Se.		

Long . . . .	Lumber.	Put down (im-	Rukdo.
Look (impe-	Dekko.	perative)	
· rative)			
Lost . . . .	Kōgeer, Nay	Quail . . . .	Butair.
	Miller.	Quickly . . .	Jeldy.
Left (direction)	Bine.	Quietly . . . .	Arsty.
Man . . . .	Ardmy.	Rascal . . . .	Budmarsh.
Many . . . .	Boat.	Ready . . . .	Tiara.
Matches . . .	Deersalie.	Right, Fit . .	Teek.
Medicine . . .	Dewai.	Right (direc-	Dinah.
Milk . . . .	Dood.	tion)	
Money . . . .	Paisa.	Road . . . .	Surruk.
Mud . . . .	Mutty.	River . . . .	Nuddia.
My, Mine . . .	Humāra.		
		Saddle . . . .	Zeen.
Near . . . .	Nezdeek.	Sand Grouse .	Burteetur.
Never Mind . .	Koochpur-	Servant . . . .	Noaker.
	warny.	Sick . . . .	Beemar.
New . . . .	Nire.	Shot (subst.)	Goalee.
News, Infor-	Kubber.	Settled . . . .	Bitegeer.
mation		Sit down (im-	Bitō.
No use . . . .	Kooch fider	perative)	
	nay.	Silent Be (im-	Chuprow.
No, not . . . .	Nay.	perative)	
Not (imperat.)	Mut.	Small . . . .	Chota.
Never . . . .	Kubby Nay.	Slightly . . . .	Tora, Kumty.
		Snipe . . . .	Chahar.
		Soda-water . .	B e l i g h t y
			Parny.
O'clock . . . .	Budger.	String . . . .	Russy.
Of * . . . .	Ke.	Stop (imperat.)	Tairo, Roko.
Old . . . .	Pararna.	Stick . . . .	Lukry.
Old Man . . . .	Buddha.	Sun . . . .	Doop.
Over * . . . .	Ooper.		
Partridge . . .	Teetur.	Take away (im-	Lājow.
Pea-fowl . . . .	More.	perative)	
Pigeon . . . .	Kuboota.	Take hold (im-	Pukkero.
Place . . . .	Jugger.	perative)	
Plain (subst.)	Maidarn.	Take care (im-	Kubbadar.
Plantain . . . .	Kailer.	perative)	
Proper . . . .	Pukker.		
Pull (imperat.)	Kincho.		

Tea . . . .	Char.	Water . . . .	Parny.
Teal . . . .	Moorghaby.	Want . . . .	Munkter.
There . . . .	Udder.	Wet . . . .	Geeler, Binga.
Thing . . . .	Cheese.	What? . . . .	Keer.
Throw . . . .	Ferrkdo.	When? . . . .	Kub.
Tie, Fasten . .	Barndo.	Where? . . . .	Kaharn.
To (prep.)* . .	Ko.	Why? . . . .	K i s w a s t i, Kiko, Kune.
To-morrow . .	Kul.	Wind . . . .	Hawa.
Tree . . . .	Pare.	With* . . . .	Se.
Turn Round . .	Gummow.	Work (subst.)	Karm.
(imperative)		Work (impe- rative)	Karm Kuro.
Under . . . .	Neechy.	Wounded . . .	Lugger.
Understand . .	Sumjer.	Yes . . . .	Hah.
Village . . . .	G a r n w, Bustee.	Yesterday . .	Kul.
		Yours . . . .	Tumara.

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